

PERCEPTIONS OF STUDIO BASED MUSIC TEACHERS REGARDING  
RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION OF STUDENTS

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this project was to examine the perceptions of private studio-based music teachers regarding recruitment and retention of students. Gaining insight and understanding into the careers of private studio-based music teachers is a way to help practicing teachers and educate students who aspire to have a similar career path.

Research questions included: (a) How do students and teachers become acquainted with one another? (b) What strategies do private studio-based teachers use to attract students? (c) What factors impact the effectiveness of recruitment and retention strategies used by private studio-based music teachers? (d) Why do students choose to begin privately studying music? (e) Why do students discontinue lessons?

Through the interview sequence and artifact analysis used to collect data an overall picture and a slice of reality was revealed for the reader. This picture was created in order to help those who aspire or already may be private studio-based music teachers.

Ultimately, private studio-based teachers were found to rely on many factors and phenomena to help them recruit new students. Word of mouth, location, reputation, presence in schools, and performance were discovered to be common attractions to potential students. After a student began lessons the following aspects impacted the retention period: Enjoyment or fun, achievement, teaching methods, distractions, parental involvement, and the teacher's perception of retention.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Individualized instruction from a private studio-based music teacher to an aspiring student is necessary in order to foster a society of enlightened minds that can express themselves through and appreciate music. Other arts and music can provide a society with a vehicle of expression, but the absence of such expression may create a void. Lawrence Wright, the author of *The Looming Tower: Al-Qaeda and the Road to 9/11*, states that, “Radicalism usually prospers in the gap between rising expectations and declining opportunities. This is especially true where the population is young, idle, and bored; where art is impoverished; where entertainment – movies, theatre, music – is policed or absent altogether; and where young men are set apart from the consoling and socializing presence of women” (Wright, 2006, 123). In our society we are blessed with many opportunities to learn how to positively express ourselves in an artistic way. Private studio-based music lessons are just one of the traditions in our culture that allow for the continued development of music.

According to Wei (2010) parents of students often seek private studio-based musical instruction because the large ensemble emphasis of a public school music program focuses on the end product, most often a performance. Wei (2010) uses a framework for operating a private studio-based music teaching career, but the project is focused more on the pragmatic components of running a private studio instead of the phenomena at large. Wei describes the business aspect of the career



relative to one reality and experience, which only makes generalities possible to the author's perception.

The main purpose of Wei's (2010) work is to "provide a practical suggestions to help teachers solve these problems" and other they may encounter. (p. 4) He does mention the importance of building a good network and a reputation. Flyers, neighborhood bulletin boards, brochures, business cards, and a website are all tools that can be used to advertise your services. While having information about running a business, rules and procedures for students, billing protocol, interviews for new students, tax issues, practice habits, and teaching strategies are all very relevant to private studio-based music lessons, they are virtually meaningless without the students. Focusing on how to build a network of students is clearly one of the first and foremost tasks to be completed by a new teacher or a teacher that has relocated.

For the purposes of this project I have chosen to specifically focus on the phenomenon that surround recruitment and retention of students. It is assumed that teachers will have all the necessary prerequisites for a teaching studio. Without the teacher the student could remain directionless, but without the student the teacher does not even begin to exist. While Wei's gesture toward recruitment and advertising is graciously noted a more sophisticated look into private studio-based music teaching could reveal a deeper insight and understanding.

Private studio-based music teachers often earn an income by teaching students that aspire to learn the art of music. There is a vast range of teaching

venues that include music retail stores, private lesson facilities, public school band rooms, and even the teacher's home. Duke, Flowers, and Wolfe (1998) explain that, "Individualized instruction has an extensive and rich history, and the long tradition of music apprenticeship has led to deeply held convictions about the purposes, benefits, and substance of private music study" (p. 51). Learning to play an instrument, or at least taking lessons, is something that is commonplace in the lives of many people. From early on in life some children are strongly encouraged, but many are forced to take piano lessons. Many times it is a rite of passage for a child, but other times it is seemingly a strategy to get a child involved in music.

Recruitment and retention strategies in education, social movements, or medical studies help to gain the attention of prospective members and keep them engaged in the group. These groups may rely heavily on recruitment and retention strategies in order to strengthen the longevity of the organization or group. For the long-term survival of a private studio-based music teaching career an understanding of the phenomena surrounding recruitment and retention may be the key.

Much can be learned by looking at other forms of recruitment such as medical studies, social movements, or music programs. Weinstein (2005) describes aspects of rebel groups operating on the African continent. While the recruitment methods, as described by Weinstein, for rebel groups in African may not be the most ethical in our society there are two interesting ideas that emerge. Potential recruits can be divided into two categories: investors or consumers. A consumer is a low-

commitment individual seeking short-term gains from their participation, while an investor is dedicated to the long-term goals and aspirations of the group or organization. In music, we see similar consumers and investors. A musical consumer may be interested in learning how to play one song or want to know how many lessons it takes to learn an instrument. A musical investor may be someone who is intrinsically motivated and enjoys musical challenges. Both musical consumers and investors are involved in private studios.

Mixon (2005) introduced several important suggestions to educators that are building instrumental music programs in urban schools. A private studio-based music teacher may benefit from Mixon's ideas regarding positive behaviors associated with recruitment of students. Behaviors include: a) Whenever you are in contact with students, be friendly, enthusiastic, and a good listener; b) Students are usually more motivated if they like the teacher; c) Helping with other issues at school in order to make yourself visible; d) Teaching general music, or a vocal ensemble may help students become interested; e) Building collegial relationships with other teachers and activity leaders often helps to build rapport and reliability.

All of Mixon's (2005) ideas can be adapted to fit the environment of private studio-based music teachers. For example, if an individual is selling guitars during the day at a local music store and teaching lessons in the evening he may be able to introduce the customers to the ideas of taking private studio-based lessons. If the teacher makes a good impression and gains the goodwill of the prospective student lessons may begin. Hypothetically, if the guitar salesman/teacher engages in an

outreach to local schools and the community he may increase his sales and the size of the private studio. A professional relationship could potentially develop between the salesman/teacher and public school music teachers. This is one of many ways to apply Mixon's concepts and ideas to the world of a private studio-based music teacher.

Mixon (2005) also brings to light several ideas that may help to gain the interest and support of the students. First, having a musical ensemble that is culturally relevant will help the students relate to music through cultural ties. Secondly, in an urban setting there are more students living in poverty that may need to be motivated by receiving immediate returns for their efforts. Lastly, teachers need to have an open line of communication with the students' parents, or caregiver.

These strategies and ideas may be found during the course of the project. Imagine how recruitment and retention strategies would be if we did not have positive behaviors and great strategies to gain the interest of prospective individuals.

A private studio-based music teacher's career encompasses a variety of characteristics, such as educational experience, performance experience, curriculum, frequency of lessons, and involvement with professional organizations. Massie (1977) describes the difference between a private studio-based teacher and studio teachers working for an academic institution. A very important difference is that a private studio-based teacher should be "well acquainted with all commonly

heard music genres” (Massie, 1977, p. 134). A teacher that is willing to branch out in order to accommodate a broad range of musical genres including rock, punk rock, emo, heavy metal, jazz, classical may, over the course of time, have more success as a private studio-based teacher. Such differences in content often seek to draw students that pursue lessons for recreation, or fun, rather than students seeking a career in music. Therefore, this project solely focuses on private studio-based teachers that offer private lessons that are not part of an academic institution’s curriculum in a traditional western sense.

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of studio-based music teachers regarding recruitment and retention. Research questions included: (a) How do students and teachers become acquainted with one another? (b) What strategies do private studio-based teachers use to attract students? (c) What factors impact the effectiveness of recruitment and retention strategies used by private studio-based teachers? (d) Why do students choose to begin privately studying music? (e) Why do students discontinue lessons?

### *Definitions*

**Private Studio-Based Music Teacher:** for the purposes of this study is an individual that instructs a student in music on a regular one on one basis but maintains no contractual agreement with an institution to do so. Such a person receives money directly from the student and manages the financial aspect of the business.

**Private Student:** for the purposes of this study is an individual that receives instruction from a private studio-based music teacher.

**Private Studio:** for the purposes of this project is a collective of students that study music privately with the same private studio-based music teacher.

**Recruitment:** for the purposes of this project is the act of inviting, or finding, new people to become students in a private studio-based music lessons facility.

**Retention:** for the purposes of this project is the act of keeping a student actively enrolled in private studio-based music lessons.

## CHAPTER II

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature on recruitment and retention is quite broad, spanning over many fields. After having conducted an extensive search for literature on the topics of recruitment and retention three fields emerged: Medical Studies, Social Movements, and Music Education. Each discipline introduces various methods of recruitment and retention strategies. Also, when appropriate certain teaching methods have been discussed because of the possible impact on retention strategies.

#### *Medical Studies*

Julion, Gross, and Barclay-McLaughlin (2000) conducted a study of recruitment and retention strategies used to recruit families representative of racial minorities that reside in urban areas, or inner cities. In the opening paragraph of the article the authors state that, "recruitment and retention strategies that typically work with middle-class European-Americans do not work with persons of color, particularly African Americans and Latinos from low-income communities" (Julion, Gross, & Barclay-McLaughlin, 2000, p. 230). Care was taken by the researchers to find recruitment techniques that were necessarily not directed at white middle-class members of the population.

This study targeted a total of 300 low-income families that used day care centers that served low-income families. All of the participants completed a series of questionnaires administered by interviewers and an observational video-tape was made of the parents playing with the children. The interviewers, of various ethnic

and racial backgrounds, were first required to attend eight to ten hours of training conducted by the research staff.

A focus group led by one of the authors was audio recorded and transcribed verbatim. The transcript was reviewed against the audiotape in order to check for accuracy and to insert pseudonyms when appropriate. Next, the transcript was entered into a software program (NUD\*IST) and coded according to categories that were agreed upon by the authors. Themes derived from the codes included techniques used to recruit participants, personal attributes that made a difference in recruitment and retention, barriers that family interviewers faced recruiting African American and Latino families, and what it was like recruiting families into a study headed by a white researcher.

The strategy that was determined to be most effective was referred to as “doing time”. This phrase, while it may not be the most suitable, is used to describe the “process of developing competence and understanding meaning from the participants’ perspective” (Julion, Gross, & Barclay-McLaughlin, 2010, p. 232). “Doing time” requires those conducting interviews or collecting data to spend time getting to know the members of the community in which they are conducting the study. Knowing the group of people you are trying to recruit for whatever cause is one of the most important starting points for any successful recruiting effort.

Developing a way to establish and build trust with the members of the community is something the researchers and family interviewers encountered during the project. Family interviewers used the following ways to establish trust:



sharing personal information, sharing employment information, swapping recipes, and mentoring a participant. Trust between the participants and family interviewers was a gradual process that was necessary for successful recruitment of the participants. According to Julion, Gross, and Barclay-McLaughlin (2010) trust was “the natural outcome of doing time at the recruitment site” and “allowed the family interviewers to develop relationships and become part of the day care center community” prior to the collection of data.

Sensitivity, flexibility, and adaptability were characteristics required for successful recruitment. Being a member of the racial or ethnic minority group was also advantageous to family interviewers when situations needed to be quickly understood. Ultimately, none of the family interviews stated that it was important for recruiters to be from the same minority groups as the potential participants. Being familiar with the community, receiving training, having regular meetings with the interviewers and research staff, presenting the community with the learned information, creating an environment of mutual trust, and “Doing time” were all essential elements determined to be a successful part of recruiting for families of color from the inner city.

Pretoran, Browner, and Lieber (2001) examined the problems of recruiting immigrant Latino couples for a qualitative health-related research. Secondly, they wanted to have an example of how recruitment strategies affect the composition of the study sample and therefore affect the study findings. Recruiting minorities for qualitative research projects was seen as a challenge to this group of researchers.

The participants were women of Mexican-origin living in Southern California who were offered amniocentesis because they had screened positive on a routinely offered prenatal blood test called the o-fetoprotein (AFP) test. An AFP test can indicate risk of neural tube defects, intestinal, kidney, liver, or placental problems, as well as Down syndrome and other chromosomal anomalies. Following the results of a positive AFP an expecting mother may have a high resolution ultra-sound which may reveal an expected anomaly. However, only about half of the ultra-sounds reveal an explanation. Many times a pregnant woman would be offered amniocentesis, which is a procedure that involves a biopsy of the placenta.

The researchers wanted to study couples rather than just the women in order to learn about men's values, attitudes, and needs in relation to fetal diagnosis or the impact they might have of the woman's decision to have amniocentesis. After establishing a connection with the women, the researchers then attempted to gain the goodwill of the fathers and persuade them to participate in the study.

122 couples were recruited for participation in the study and 120 wound up completing their portion of the project. 27 women involved in the project became single prior to an interview with the male partner. As a result of this circumstance the newly single women were retained in order to study the effect of marital status on recruitment efforts and variables. The participants of this study were offered a monetary incentive prior to their agreement to participate in the study.

Four strategies for recruitment were used to recruit the couples for the study. The "standard" strategy was to contact one of the partners, usually the

woman. Next the researcher would call the couple in order to follow up with both the female and male partners. The “on the spot” strategy was used when the couple agreed to participate in the study and required no follow up procedure. “Co-recruitment” was another strategy employed by the researchers. First the women would be recruited for the study. Rather than having the researcher complete a follow up phone call, it was the responsibility of the woman to gain the consent of the male partner before the researcher would complete the recruitment process. When using the “brokering” strategy it was the female recruit’s task to independently recruit the male partner with no help from the researchers.

Several very practical ideas emerged from this study that may be used in conjunction with recruiting students for a private studio. Helping potential participants by doing small favors is perhaps a way to build and solidify trust. In this particular study the researchers offered small favors such as helping the recruit communicate with medical staff, complete hospital forms, find a pay phone, or keep an eye on the children. Also the researchers would break the ice by initiating conversation with the subjects.

Conclusions indicated that recruiters from the same ethnic background as the target population or using community leaders as intermediaries was thought to help increase the effectiveness of the recruiting effort. By gaining the trust of potential recruits and offering monetary compensation for their participation, the efforts to recruit prospective participants increases. The strategies and ideas that

emerged from this study can clearly be related to the concept of “doing time”, as described in previous paragraphs.

Sexton, Adgate, Church, Greaves, Ramachandran, Fredrickson, Geisser, and Ryan (2003) studies the recruitment, retention and compliance results from a probability study of children’s environmental health in economically disadvantaged neighborhoods. This article brings to light several things that may be important when examining recruiting efforts in disadvantaged neighborhoods in larger urban areas.

The purpose of this project was to summarize recruitment, retention and commonplace results from a novel school-based investigation of children’s exposure to multiple hazardous chemicals in two low-income neighborhoods in Minneapolis. Participants were evaluated by the School Health Initiative: Environment, Learning, and Disease (SHIELD) study which examined children’s exposure to complex mixtures of environmental agents. (Sexton et. al, 2003) Environmental, personal, and biological data were collected during two monitoring session during the course of each school year of participation. The project used a stratified-random sampling design in order to make sure that numbers were appropriate with the defined sub groups of children.

While this particular study goes on to examine the health and well being of the participants, the aspects of recruitment and retention of the participants is of particular interest for the purposes of my study. Before and during the recruitment effort researchers used letters to key community groups, presentations at parent-

teacher meetings, school open houses, and brochures. Through the use of these efforts 558 children enrolled in grades 2-5 participated in the SHIELD study.

Recruiters for the study first contacted the principal of the child's school and a letter that described the study, encouraged participation, and word that a recruiter would contact them was sent to the parents. When it was necessary the letters were translated into the appropriate language. Children and families were offered financial incentives for successfully completing research related tasks, which could total \$280 for two years of participation.

Results indicated that children living in low socioeconomic situations have a different lifestyle than their suburban or rural counterparts. During the course of the study the children observed regularly moved with little or no warning, lived in various blended family arrangements, had limited access or no telephone, and often suffered as a result of the families economic hardships.

The parents of the children observed in the study were often immigrants that may or may not speak English as a second language. When the language barrier is combined with the absence of a telephone, communication becomes increasingly difficult. The researchers found that it is advantageous to be able to speak several languages fluently in order to communicate more effectively with the parents of potential subjects. Also in congruence with the previously discussed articles it is beneficial to gain an understanding of the target population's language, culture, and behaviors.

Sharp, Fitzgibbon, and Schiffer (2008) studied the recruitment of 213 obese black women between the ages of 30 and 65 years old with a body mass index between 30 kg/m<sup>2</sup> and 50 kg/m<sup>2</sup> into a physical activity and nutrition intervention trial. The purpose of the article was to describe the methods used in recruiting black women into the Obesity Reduction Black Intervention Trial (ORBIT) and final yield of participants.

Research assistants with extensive experience conducting community and minority based health studies conducted recruitment sessions, usually in two-hour chunks, at different times of the day and on different weekdays. Active and passive recruiting techniques were used in order to recruit participants.

Active recruiting involves direct contact between research staff and potential participants. A two square mile area centered on the intervention site was chosen by the research assistants and then canvassed in order to begin the recruiting effort. The research assistants found that in some areas they needed prior approval to conduct their recruitment effort while other public areas required no prior approval. After a flyer was distributed to the potential participants from the research assistant, it was hoped that the potential recruit would contact the study coordinator at a later date by telephone.

Passing the information about an organization to others so that, in turn, they can pass along the information is another form of active recruiting. Such an individual is usually outside of the target population, but remains sympathetic to the general cause of the research. Endorsements from such an individual, especially if

they have notoriety in the community, seemingly makes the recruitment effort more appealing to a potential participant.

On the other side of the coin, passive recruitment refers to the approach that prompts a potential participant to contact the project staff without having direct contact. Passive recruiting includes mass emails, posting flyers in high traffic areas, leaving brochures in barbershops, nail salons, beauty shops, dry cleaners, restaurants, and community colleges.

When the women in the study were asked how they learned about the program: 45% of the women stated that they learned about the study from a brochure. While 27% percent learned about the study from a family member or friend. Approximately 26.4% responded to mass emails sent through a university system.

In this study there was bias that impacted the availability of participants. Because this study required participants to be physically active the participants needed medical clearance from a doctor to participate. Suspicion surrounds the reasons as to why some women did not return the medical consent form. Perhaps it was due to a financial barrier that was created as a result of a doctor visit or some other negative influence.

### *Social Movements*

Rochford (1968) conducted a study that sought to draw conclusions that ideology and organizational arrangements are impacted or shaped by recruitment

opportunities and associated recruitment strategies. The International Society for Krishna Consciousness (ISKCON) was the group that Rochford observed.

The content of Rochford's article comes from three distinct sources. First he observed the Los Angeles ISKCON community over a five-year period. Over the course of the study the researcher took part in day-to-day activities and conducted formal and informal interviews. The researcher even had an insider experience when he would, as a recruit, enter Bhakta programs for new members, called neophytes. Secondly, a review of ISKCON's scholarly literature and supplemental interviews and conversations with Krishna devotees were used. Thirdly, a non-random survey of six ISKCON communities was conducted in 1980. This survey was completed by 214 adult members of ISKCON and represented followers from Los Angeles, Denver, Chicago, Port Royal, New York, and Boston.

Four types of contacts between prospective recruits and the social movement were self-initiated contacts, contacts made with movement members in public, contacts made through social network ties with friends, acquaintances, and family members belonging to the movement, and non-member networks ties where movement sympathizers influence persons in their sphere of social relations to join a movement (Rochford 1968).

Flexibility was key in this effort. Swami Prabhupada, the leader of the ISKCON, was accepting of the behaviors and customs exhibited by the potential recruits. The history of the ISKCON in the United States was traced back to its beginnings in 1965. The type of people initially targeted for recruitment were



elderly and lived on New York's West Side. After several attempts to get the movement off the ground Swami Prabhupada began to take an interest in the youth living on the Bowery on the Lower East Side. Many of the younger recruits were into music, drugs, and lived nomadic lifestyles.

The main recruiting tool observed in the early days was person-to-person communication. Rochford (1968) states,

Given the structural openness of ISKCON in those first days in New York and the availability of social networks as a means to disseminate information about the movement, we would expect that social ties would serve as the primary means of recruitment (p. 403).

After a year of recruiting in New York, the movement had 19 members. Eight had become members through network ties, while six had direct encounters with Swami Prabhupada.

The movement would move to the headquarters to Haight-Ashbury district of San Francisco in 1967. Several things were advantageous to a recruiting effort that did not emerge in the New York location. First, the temple that was located in an area that saw heavy foot traffic. Secondly, chanting parties were sent out into the streets in order to spread Swami Prabhupada's message. Thirdly, because many of the young people in Haight-Ashbury were less than tied down and free thinking the movement had a larger source of potential recruits. As a result, the movement began to develop a more closed communal structure.

Flexibility and the ease of making adaptations is key to a recruitment effort in any given location. Following the success of the effort in San Francisco, ISKCON began to deploy devote followers to other cities to further the movement. Los Angeles happened to be one of the new sites selected for a new temple. A middle-class residential area rather than an urban center was selected for the main center of activity. This required the recruitment strategies to undergo yet another change. Rather than recruiting for a communal living environment similar to the establishment located in San Francisco, the effort in Los Angeles was impacted by the selected location. The chanting parties that were successful in San Francisco did not have the same degree of persuasiveness in Los Angeles. In order to help the recruiting effort be more successful, ISKCON decided to try to recruit the friends and family members of indoctrinated devotees.

Those persons that have basic knowledge regarding ISKCON, any other movement, and/or cause that seemingly influence others to participate but are not participants are referred to as “sympathizers” (Rochford, 1968, p. 405). Although at the time this article was written few studies had been conducted regarding the role that sympathizers play in a recruitment effort. It is certainly plausible that one individual could seemingly draw influence from another individual despite the fact that she may not express a high level of commitment or dedication to the movement. Sympathizers can lack direct contact with a movement or have previously participated, but no longer choose to follow the given path. The role of the

sympathizer needs more study in order to determine how large of a role they play in recruitment.

Accepting part-time devotees was something that ISKCON decided to pursue in order to keep interest and financial stability. A devotee stated, “if a potential recruit can only accept five percent, fine, then we should encourage them so that they can accept more, make more progress” (p. 407). This type of encouragement helps to build a stronger base of potential full-time members.

The ideology, goals, and organizational structure of a social movement emerge over time. This study is no exception. ISKCON was successful in engaging new recruits because recruiting strategies were modified in order to better suit the population of potential members.

Ultimately, had the strategies for recruitment not changed as the movement expanded to different locations, the overall recruitment effort would have been greatly impacted. By choosing to modify strategies and be more accepting of individuals the movement had more prosperity.

#### *Related Studies in Music*

Cutietta and McAllister (1997) studied the personalities of beginning band students. The research questions were: a.) Is there a propensity for certain personality types to begin instrumental study in the schools? b.) Are certain personality types more likely to continue in instrumental music across grades? c.) Is there a trend toward homogeneity of personality type among students who choose to continue in instrumental music across grade levels? d.) Is there a relationship

between personality type and continuations on a specific musical instrument?

Personality could be a leading factor in strategies developed or used in retaining students in a private studio.

In this study 668 students in grades 7-12 participated. The sample is composed of students that attended schools in urban, suburban, and rural areas. The instrument used to collect and measure data regarding the student's personalities was the Junior Eysneck Personality Questionnaire. This questionnaire measures the aspects of tough-mindedness, extraversion, emotionality, and lying. The research procedures were clearly articulated thus creating an experiment that could be easily replicated.

Ultimately the authors of this study found, "there may be a relationship between personality, instrument choice, and continued participation in band" (Cutietta & McAllister, 1997, p. 284). However, they found that there is not a propensity for certain personality types to participate in instrumental music in middle school. Secondly, they found that high school students in instrumental music programs were similar to the normal population of high school students. Thirdly, the authors found that there was a trend toward homogeneity of personality types among students who choose to continue in instrumental music across grade levels. Finally, in order to show whether there is a connection between personality types and continuation on a specific musical instrument, the researchers separated the males and females. The conclusion was reached that no differences in personality types as a result of student grade or instrument played. Furthermore, the results of

this study show that students in instrumental programs are an adequate representation of the general school population. The results of this study, although they sought to describe students in band programs, may have similarities in the field of private lessons.

Duke, Flowers, and Wolfe (1998) studied students who took piano lessons from teachers in the United States. Researchers were seeking to profile students and families participating in private studio-based lessons. Secondly, researchers wanted to examine the relationship among various aspects of students' lives and their experience with music. Lastly, the researchers wanted to document the perceptions of teachers, parents, and students regarding the benefits of keyboard study for children.

In order to clearly identify expert teachers Duke, Flowers, and Wolfe (1998) consulted nearly 100 piano pedagogy faculty members teaching at colleges and university to identify excellent piano teachers in their respective regions. 400 potential participants were contacted and 170 agreed to participate. Each participating teacher submitted a list of students whose parents agreed to participate. Over 2,642 people agreed to participate and of that number 951 were selected as the study population. Each student, teacher, and parent completed extensive questionnaires related to the student's piano study and the student's life in general. Attitude, achievement, participation in organized and informal extracurricular activities, interactions with family and friends, personality, and common daily activities were addressed by the questionnaires.

Results indicated that the majority of students whose parents could afford private studio-based lessons also had numerous life advantages when compared with children of lower socioeconomic status. The students in the sample population were generally the children of well educated, affluent, White, suburban or urban professionals. Of the students that fit the aforementioned description nearly 75 percent take piano lessons while simultaneously participating in sports, other musical instruments, dance, and drama. The authors called the students of the sample “good kids” which was to indicate that the students fared rather well in most endeavors (Duke, Flowers, & Wolfe, 1998, p. 77).

In this study the parents were often responsible for initiating the course of piano study for their children. However, nearly one half of the students replied that they wanted to learn to play the piano. When students were asked about discontinuing lessons it was apparent that most students choosing to discontinue lessons were in some way dissatisfied with the experience. Lack of enjoyment and competing activities were two factors identified by teachers that would lead to a student discontinuing lessons. The participants of this study indicated that piano lessons contributed to student’s development of personal discipline, concentration, confidence, responsibility, and self-esteem.

Ultimately the researchers concluded that by “documenting the perceptions of excellent teachers,...parents,...students, the data presented in this report contributes to the mounting body of evidence that music study does not lead directly to the enhancement of academic skills” (Duke, Flowers, & Wolfe, 1998, p.

81). The activities and characteristics of students found in this particular project have a high degree of expected significant relationships to my project.

Duke and Henniger (2002) examined the how verbal comments made by the private studio-based music teacher to the student impacted private studio-based lessons. The purpose of the study was to determine whether third-party observers' perceptions of teacher and learning would be affected by different forms of verbal correction when viewed in the context of successful lessons.

Fifty-one undergraduate students enrolled in teacher preparation programs in the Schools of Music at The Ohio State University, Columbus, and The University Texas at Austin participated as researcher subjects. Subjects were asked to evaluate a video taped lesson of a teacher helping a student to play the theme song from Sesame Street. Two styles of lessons, directive and negative feedback, were evaluated by the researcher subjects. The directive lesson was designed to have the teacher correct the student in a specific manner avoiding negative feedback until the student achieved the desired result. Characteristics of the negative lesson included the teacher identifying what the student had done incorrectly while making no constructive suggestions or directions.

The results of the study indicated that the verbalization to make corrections in student performance did not affect attitude or achievement or the subjects' perceptions of teaching and learning. However, it is expected that at some point teaching methods and verbal interactions between students and private studio-based music teachers will impact overall retention in private lessons.

Another area that fits within the realm of communication is the delivery and the content of the lesson, which was examined in a study done by Hamann, Baker, McAllister, & Bauer in (2000). The purpose statement of this study was “to determine what effect, if any, music teacher classroom-delivery skills or lesson content had on university music students’ perception of lesson or teacher appeal by student academic standing” (p. 104).

In this study 511 subjects studying at three moderate-size universities located in the mid-western and eastern United States were asked to evaluate a videotaped lesson. The researchers used four different videotaped lessons to show the subjects. The videos were labeled: a) good delivery and good content; b) poor delivery and good content; c) good delivery and poor content; d) poor delivery and poor content. The subjects were asked to complete a questionnaire after viewing one of the videos.

Hamann, Baker, McAllister, and Bauer (2000) concluded that content and delivery were contributing factors to the perception of lesson quality. The subjects found teaching episodes with good teacher-delivery skills to be more interesting than the lessons with poor teacher-delivery. This research confers that delivery rather than content is perhaps what holds appeal to most students. Also having excellent teacher-delivery skills is a characteristic of successful classroom music teachers. Ultimately the results supported the hypothesis that delivery rather than content of classroom lessons impacted the perceptions of students.



Kostka (2002) examined practice expectations and attitudes of college level music teachers and students. The purpose of this study was to examine the expectations and attitudes toward practice by studio music teachers as well as those of college-age music students. Attitudes about certain music skills, expectations for use of practice time, expectations for routines and strategies for practicing, and attitudes about practice in general were four specific areas of interest.

The subjects of this study were 127 studio teacher and 134 undergraduate and graduate music majors attending 16 colleges and universities that included research universities, conservatories, and junior colleges. Each subject was asked to complete a questionnaire that contained 10 questions that addressed demographics, attitudes concerning musical skills, use of time during practice, practice strategies and routines, and attitudes about practice in general. The subjects' identities remained anonymous throughout the duration of the study.

The results showed that musicality was considered the most important of the musical skills. Subjects rated sight-reading as relatively unimportant. Teachers and students agreed on the skills and activities that were the most important to practice. Little indication was given to whether or not students and teachers communicated about establishing a practice plan or evaluating its effectiveness. It was noted by the researcher that teachers and students were not intentionally paired with one another therefore making it difficult to make generalizations. Data was intended to give a summary of the opinions of the two separate groups, teachers and students.

Practice time is certainly an overwhelming component and requirement of student enrolled in private studio-based lessons and could impact the longevity of retention.

Rife, Shenk, Lauby, and Lapidus (2001) performed a study in which they investigated children's satisfaction in private music lessons. The purpose of the study was to investigate factors related to satisfaction with private music lessons in children, ages 9 to 12. Another purpose was to provide a tool to help improve private music instruction by developing a reliable, valid, and practical measure that can be used to assess private music lesson satisfaction from children.

Five hundred sixty eight students, ages 9 to 12, participated in the data-collection phase of the study. Each participant at the time was taking private music lessons. Venues for subject assessment included private music studios, public and private schools, youth orchestras, and a music festival. The students were asked to complete a 45-item scale, called the Music Lesson Satisfaction Scale (MLSS), that contained positively and negatively worded statements in order measure their satisfaction with their musical endeavors. This was used to measure pleasurable feelings and enjoyable outcomes of music lessons.

Ultimately without having positive reinforcement from parents and motivators such as feeling good or having fun, enjoying practicing and improving, liking their music teacher, or liking the challenge it is unlikely that children would continue to participate in private music lessons. The MLSS can be used by music teachers to help modify current teaching techniques to help lower the drop-out rate of private music students.

Speer (1994) conducted an analysis of sequential patterns of instruction in piano lessons. The purpose of this study was to explore verbal behavior of independent piano teachers within the context of specific components of sequential patterns of the teacher. The relevance of this article is that the methods used by the teacher may appease or repel the students. A sequential method of teaching may help to increase retention of students.

A sequential pattern of teaching is one that includes task presentation, student response and teacher feedback (Speer, 1994). An example of how this works is: a direction is given to the student, the student acts as directed, and then the teacher provides feedback to the student. It was found that independent piano teachers in private lesson settings are generally less specific than other music educators in their responses to student activity. Often the teachers in the study would provide non-specific approvals or disapprovals rather than specific feedback.

Collecting the data for this study was a very unique process. First, 25 independent piano teachers from the metropolitan area in the Southern United States were selected. Each subject's participation in the study was voluntary. The next step of the data collection process was for the teachers to select two piano lessons to record on audiotape. The subjects were asked to submit tapes that were contrasting. One taped lesson was to have a student younger than 11 years old and the second tape was to have a student that was 11 years or older. The researcher also asked that one of the samples be representative of a more advanced or better student.

After the taped lessons had been recorded and submitted to the researcher each lesson was transcribed and coded for components of sequential teaching patterns according to the following categories: a) teacher presentation; b) student response; c) teacher reinforcements; d) sequential patterns (Speer, 1994, p. 18). Each category had a specific code that was used as the researchers evaluated and examined the tape-recorded lessons.

The researchers identified three patterns – complete/correct, complete/incorrect, or incomplete – that could impact the student’s satisfaction with lessons, which may ultimately impact whether or not the student continues lessons. Speer supports the act of providing students with positive feedback at the end of the sequential teaching pattern. This type of teaching could create a more positive and encouraging experience for students.

#### *Retention in Music*

Corenblum and Marshall (1998) focused on predicting students’ intentions of continuing to study music. “Knowing which factors predict retention could help educators make efficient use of teaching resources as well as develop intervention strategies for retaining students likely to drop out” as well as predict financial scenarios that may become present as a result of attrition. (p. 129) The purpose of this study was to develop and test a model that could predict student intentions to continue musical study.

Several hypotheses were tested as a result of this study. First, socioeconomic level should predict students’ outside music interests and their perceptions of their

parents' attitudes. Second, perceived school support of the band program should predict band teacher attitudes, and these attitudes should predict student attitudes, which, in turn, should predict intentions. Third, teacher evaluations and grades should directly predict student intentions to continue; that is, positive evaluations should be associated with intentions to remain in the program. Last, teacher evaluations and grades should predict attributions for band grades.

235 students in grade 9 enrolled in band programs in seven schools in the St. James-Assiniboia School Division of Winnipeg, Manitoba were the participants. This grade level was selected because the students were most likely to quit after one year in high school band. Students were asked to complete a questionnaire that assessed attitude toward the band program, outside musical interests, and their perceptions of the attitudes of their parents, band teachers, and the band program at large. "Attitudes may not be as good a predictor of future intentions as are factors that help to initiate and maintain behavior over time" (Corenblum & Marshall 1998, p. 137).

The results of the study found that socioeconomic level, teacher evaluations, and perceived attitudes were able to predict students' intentions to continue in band programs. The found that privileged individuals, of higher socioeconomic status, were encouraged to continue in music and other academic endeavors. Through this exploration the researchers suggest that music programs not be neglected, but should be sensitive to the musical traditions reflected in the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the students. "By building on student strengths and

interest, dropout rates from music classes may be reduced, and interest in other form of musical expression may be increased.” (Corenblum & Marshall, 1998, 137) Ultimately, the finds were very much in line with the hypotheses of the study.

Costa-Giomi (2004) conducted a study that attempted to explore and analyze the behaviors of students that ultimately dropped out of piano lessons. The purpose of this study was to identify early predictors of dropout behavior in children engaged in piano instruction, namely demographic characteristics, practice routines, musical and general abilities, and family characteristics.

Of the many behaviors that were observed, the one that seems most apparent would be that students that quit lessons had more absences, practiced less per week, practiced less throughout the year, and completed homework to a lesser degree. Children that completed three years of piano lessons showed higher achievement in the first six weeks than the students that dropped out. Parents that maintained open communication with the teacher had children that were more likely to continue lessons. The authors concluded that lowered motivation and diminished achievement were the reasons for quitting lessons.

The demographic backgrounds of the students were also used to find the following information: 32% of students that quit lived in households earning less than \$20,000 USD; 34% of student that quit lived in households earning between \$20,000 and \$30,000 USD; 34% of students that quit lived in households earning more than \$30,000 USD; In 52% of students that quit both parents were employed; When one parent was employed or both parents were unemployed only 33% quit.

Less than 1/3 of the children whose parents completed elementary school continued while more than half of the children whose parents completed high-school or college continued; 48% of children of single parents quit; 33% of children with two parents quit; 78% of the children that quit had no siblings; 57% of students who completed the program had one sibling; 85% of the children that completed had two or more siblings. Demographics and family life may have a clear impact on the success of the retention rate in a private studio-based teaching environment.

Costa-Giomi, Flowers, and Sasaki (2005) examined the differences in lesson behavior and performance. This was done by looking at matched pairs of children who studied with the same teacher. The pair of children included one child that continued piano lessons for three years and one child that discontinued lessons after one or two years. The age, school, and the initial level of piano achievement and ability were also closely matched when selecting a pair of students. Effort was made to closely match students with similar behaviors and whose opportunities were similar, but in the end one persisted and the other discontinued.

The sample population consisted of 28 students; 14 that continued with lessons and 14 that discontinued. Each participant was videotaped at 2 lessons and in the 12<sup>th</sup> or 27<sup>th</sup> week respectively. The video was then facilitated through the use of SCRIBE, or Simple Computer Recording Interface for Behavioral Evaluation, software. This software program was used to record frequencies or durations of behaviors that would later be selected for analysis. Each video reviewed by the

software four times. The first was to record the amount of time spent in student playing, students playing with the teacher, and teacher modeling for the student. The second review recorded the frequency of student self-corrections and seeking approval. The third review noted frequencies of teacher verbal approval, verbal corrections and cues. The final review documented lesson progress in 10-second intervals.

The awareness of student needs could be one of the most misunderstood aspects of teaching. Music students often behave in certain ways in which they are looking for teacher approval or feedback. Costa-Giomi, Flowers, & Sasaki (2005) found that students that drop out of piano lessons often exhibit behaviors that seek teacher approval. In this study the researchers stated that, “a quiet glance or look at the teacher, as if asking for confirmation or feedback” was approval-seeking behavior (p. 244). If applied to the recruitment and retention strategies of the studio-based teacher awareness could have positive effects.

Klinedinst (1991) studied achievement and retention. The purpose of the study was to examine the ability of selected factors to predict achievement and retention of beginning instrumental music students. The author was searching to answer the following questions: (a) which of the select variables have predictive value for performance achievement of fifth-grade beginning instrumental music students? (b) Which of the selected variables have predictive value for teacher rating of student achievement in instrumental music? (c) Which of the selected



variables have predictive value for retention of fifth-grade beginning instrumental music students?

The subjects for this investigation included all fifth-grade students who enrolled in the beginning instrumental program of the Cumberland Valley School District in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania. There were 210 students total, but 5 were omitted because they had previous instruction in music. The eleven factors that were examined as performance achievement and retention predictors were: (a) musical aptitude, (b) scholastic ability, (c) math achievement, (d) reading achievement, (e) general music teacher rating, (f) attitude toward music, (g) self-concept in music, (h) music background, (i) motivation to achieve in music, (j) socioeconomic status, and (k) instrument adaptation assessment.

The design of the study was a pre-test post-test type of design. First the students were given a proficiency exam in order to measure their ability. Second, the students were given instruction over a period of time. Lastly they were retested with the proficiency exam.

Results of the study showed that attitude towards music, self-concept in music, and home musical background have a strong "interrelationship indicating that student from music homes tend to have positive attitudes toward music and possess a good self-concept regarding music" (Klinedinst 1991, p. 235). The implications of this study included advocating for music aptitude testing to be combined with academic ability and achievement test scores to identify students who would continue to participate in the music program. Klinedinst (1991) states

that “typical recruitment procedures used in many beginning instrumental music programs focus on creating and heightening student interest in learning to play a musical instrument without regard for the student’s potential for music learning.” (p. 236) Ultimately the more information available can help to make informed decisions.

McCarthy (1980) showed that “individualized instruction had a significant interactive effect on the performance sight-reading measure” (McCarthy 1980, p. 67). Students’ reading grade level and socioeconomic status also played a part in the Watkins-Farnum variance, MAT posttest, and 8% of student dropout. Student achievement, performance, or dropout was not predictable by race. Gender of the participants was not a factor in either the Watkins-Farnum or MAT measures, but was a minor factor in accounting for student dropout. Differences in teacher had virtually no effect on the Watkins-Farnum, MAT, or dropout.

A total of 1,199 students participated in the study. There were 687 fifth grade students and 512 sixth grade students. Of the total population 26% receiving instrumental music instruction were minority students and 43% were classified as low SES student. Over half of the subjects participating in the study were male.

Students participating in the study received either ensemble instruction or individualized instruction. During the individualized instruction students were required to rehearse their assignments by themselves when not receiving instruction. The teacher was only to give individual instruction to students when it

was formally requested. Students working independently were asked to obtain teacher approval before moving on to the next lesson.

Results indicated that individualized instruction had a significant interactive effect on the performance sight-reading measure. The students' grade levels had little to do with sight-reading performance. The race or ethnicity of the student did not indicate achievement, performance, or student dropout rate. Academically gifted students greatly benefitted in the development of performance sight-reading when individualized instruction was administered. Ultimately, individualized instruction within the confines of the classroom can help students increase their musical abilities and race or ethnicity had no impact on the musical achievement of students.

#### *Recruitment in Music*

Albert (2006) presented a qualitative study that investigated recruitment and retention in public schools that are in low socioeconomic areas. The aim of this study was to find out which strategies for recruitment and retention work best in a low socioeconomic situation. In order to gather data the research conducted three semi-structured interviews with the participants. The participants were placed into three categories: teachers, administrators, and parents. Observational field notes were also taken while observing the music classes at the various sites used for the study.

The results of the study found that exposure to the band program, the availability of a culturally relevant ensemble, teacher's perception of student perceptions of the band program, and instrument availability are considered

effective recruitment strategies. Teacher personality, philosophical values, and proactive process, sense of family, and activities are considered effective strategies for retention. Teacher qualities and practice, classroom management and student expectations, stereotypes, and positive personal contact/visibility were considered to be the most strongly suggested strategies for teachers in low SES school districts.

The strategies for recruiting and retaining students that Albert found could be found to be effective in a private studio environment located in any socioeconomic environment in an urban, suburban, or rural setting.

*Conceptual Framework (Need for this study)*

There is a very large gap in the research regarding recruitment and retention in private studio-based music teaching. There have been studies that examine recruitment and retention of students participating in band programs (Albert 2006; Cutietta & McAllister, 1997), private lessons (Duke, Flowers, & Wolfe, 1998; Duke & Henniger, 2002; Kostka, 2002; Rife, Schenk, & Lapidus, 2001; Speer, 1994; Costa-Giomi, 2004; Costa-Giomi, Flowers, & Sasaki, 2005; McCarthy, 1980), recruitment of families of color from the inner city (Julion, Gross, & Barclay-McLaughlin, 2000), recruitment of pregnant Latin-American women for a medical study (Pretoran, Browner, & Lieber, 2001) recruitment of obese black women into a physical activity and nutrition intervention trial (Sharp, Fitzgibbon, & Schiffer, 2008) and recruitment strategies in the Hare Krishna movement (Rochford 1968). However, there has been little research that examines recruitment and retention in private studio-based music teaching. Most projects dealing with the phenomena present in

private studio-based music teaching have some type of institutional affiliation, thus leaving the private sector alone.

The themes that emerged from the literature included the ideas that students seeking private studio-based music instruction could be divided into two categories, consumers and investors. As a researcher I used these two concepts as potential lenses to view the phenomena surrounding recruitment and retention.

My intentions are to provide a valuable resource to students aspiring to work as private studio-based music teachers and those currently working as private studio-based music teachers. Recruitment and retention are two very important components that impact the degree of success a person achieves during the entire span of a career. A private music teaching studio does not exist without first having a teacher, but success in teaching is only possible with a varying population of students. The students of a private music-teaching studio have to be recruited and of that population students must be retained in order for a studio to have a positive experience.

## CHAPTER III

### METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of studio-based music teachers regarding recruitment and retention. Research questions included: (a) How do students and teachers become acquainted with one another? (b) What strategies do private studio-based teachers use to attract students? (c) What factors impact the effectiveness of recruitment and retention strategies used by private studio-based teachers? (d) Why do students choose to begin privately studying music? (e) Why do students discontinue lessons?

#### *Design*

This study uses a qualitative phenomenological design. Phenomenology is the “study of the world as it appears to individuals when they lay aside the prevailing understandings of those phenomena and revisit their immediate experience of the phenomena” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 495). This theoretical framework is the most conducive to discovering the perceptions of private studio-based music teachers with regard to recruitment and retention.

Phenomenological studies work to “make sense of an experience and transform the experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning” (Patton, 2002, p. 104). This allows the research process to focus on how the participants experience their careers as private studio-based music instructors. During the course of the project the researcher often identified with each teacher’s

perceptions, which allowed the researcher to observe the phenomena from both the inside and the outside perspective

### *Theoretical Framework*

The origin of phenomenology can be traced back to the works of Edmund Husserl, Jean-Paul Sartre, and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. A phenomenon is something that can be perceived by someone. What phenomenology seeks to accomplish is to provide a description of the phenomenon as the individual experiences it. In this particular project the experience may be perceived by the usual five senses (sight, smell, taste, touch, and hearing) but may also include remembering, wishing, and feelings (Hammond, Howarth, & Keats, 1991).

By immersing yourself into a particular phenomenon experienced by an individual it is possible to learn more about the experience of another individual. This method allows both the reader and the researcher to understand the experience from the inside out or vice versa.

One important aspect of phenomenology is that it can be bent around the lived experience of a human being. An experience is something that happens to a person that is remembered. An event, injury, or moment in life could be remembered by an individual if given the proper stimulus.

Phenomenology is neither the first nor the last step in understanding a particular phenomenon, but rather it just is. The lived experience cannot be changed in order to prove or disprove a hypothesis, but rather to help others understand

what has happened and how the experience may or may not improve the lives of others.

This project clearly seeks to understand the lived experience of the participants with regard to the recruitment and retention of students but in many cases is intertwined with other aspects of a private studio-based teaching career. Therefore while the intent of the research was to gather information about recruitment and retention other aspects may be equally important in order to understand the experience.

#### *Research Sites*

The preparation and advisement for this project took place on the campus of a state funded public university with approximately 21,000 students. This location was advantageous because the resources available allowed it to function as a hub. All aspects of this study were coordinated through this location.

Participant interviews took place in school band rooms, a home studio, a music lesson facility attached to a music retail store, a participant's home, and through the communication software application Skype. More complete descriptions of each participant's interview site will be described in Chapter IV.

#### *Participants*

The subjects of the study will be divided into two categories: teachers and students. All participating teachers had a minimum of five years of experience as a private studio-based music teacher. Mr. Arbutus is a private studio-based music teacher that works at a private music-retail store that has a private teaching facility.



Mr. Whistler is a private studio-based music teacher that teaches in his or her home or other space connected or adjacent to their living quarters. Mr. Cypress is a private studio-based music teacher that owns a private teaching studio that is not connected to or adjacent to living quarters or holding an association with music retail store. Mr. Stanley is a private studio-based music teacher that travels to the location of the students. Such locations may include elementary, middle, or high schools both public and private, the homes of students, or any other location that is not the home of the teacher, music retail store, or privately owned teaching studio. Teachers participated in three semi-structured interviews during the span of six weeks during the late spring/early summer of 2010.

Two students were available to participate in the project. Davie was a student participating in lessons with Mr. Whistler. Elizabeth was a student that participated in lessons with Mr. Stanley. Students participated in one semi-structured interview in an attempt to draw connections or corroborate statements made by the teachers.

During the course of the interview sequence each teacher provided very thick background descriptions and lengthy comments about their career and the phenomena of recruitment and retention. The richness of each participant's comments has allowed for a more complete description of each participant in Chapter IV.

#### *Personal Background*

To this study I bring the experience of having been a private studio-based music teacher in few different settings that including teaching at a studio connected to a music retail store, a home-based studio, and private studio-based lessons as a graduate assistant at two different public university music schools. My personal experience with the high turnover rate of private students and moderate amount of success led to the examining this phenomenon. “The perspective that the researcher brings to a qualitative inquiry is part of the context for the findings” (Patton, 2002, p. 64). I understand some of the potential challenges faced by private studio-based teachers and I feel equipped to address these challenges. Since 2004 I have also been involved with teaching private studio-based music lessons in higher education. While teaching private studio-based lessons may have differences many aspects could be similar.

I have maintained a career as a freelance musician in many ensembles and genres during my undergraduate and graduate studies as have all of the teachers involved in this project. In one particular case a participant and I were members of the same performing ensemble. This type of understanding is important because as the project progressed I was able to empathize and in some cases understand the importance of performing in addition to private studio-based teaching.

For participants in the study, private studio-based teaching has been only a component of a web of many different tasks that combine to create a career in the music industry. Private studio-based music teachers seem to have many different aspects and components of a normal day that require a variety of skill sets that are

quite diverse and may not be present in other professions within the field of music or other fields.

### *Data and Procedures*

The teachers participated in three semi-structured interviews over the course of a six-week period. During this period two students completed one semi-structured interview in order to find any relationship between the teacher's perceptions and the student's experience or memories. The interviews were processed and transcribed by the researcher and compared with one another in order to find common themes and threads that were relevant to the recruitment and retention of students in private studio-based instruction. Meetings with the teachers and students were scheduled at the convenience of the participant with regard to place and time.

### *Interviews*

The interviews for this project were of a semi-structured nature (Merriam, 1998). A semi-structured interview leaves room for the researcher and participant to follow the flow of energy during an interview. For example, if the participant makes a statement that is considered interesting to the researcher a follow up question may be asked or a more in depth explanation could be given. Interview protocol was developed using the research questions of the project. During the interviews questions about the participant's comments in both the current and previous interviews arose. All interviews were recorded using the Zoom H4 Handy Recorder and reviewed for analysis.

*Interview 1.* The opening interview of the sequence was used to gain an understanding of the private studio-based music teacher's background in music. Information yielded during this interview helped to understand the unique characteristics of each individual teacher's career. Interview duration was between 20 and 36 minutes.

*Interview 2.* A second interview was conducted with the participant after the first interview had been reviewed. The second interview's focus was the recruitment aspect of teaching at a private studio. The duration of the interview was between 20 and 40 minutes.

*Interview 3.* A third interview was conducted after the second interview was reviewed. The third interview focused the attention to the retention aspect of private studio-based music teaching. The interviews lasted between 20 and 40 minutes.

*Student interview.* During the completion of the interview sequence for each teacher one interview for each student participant was completed. The purpose of this interview was to find similarities between the teacher's comments and the student's experience. The interviews each lasted between 10 and 20 minutes.

### *Artifact Analysis*

Another component in gathering data for this project was artifact analysis. Artifact analysis is the process by which physical objects or evidence are viewed and analyzed by the researcher in order to validate participant comments when appropriate. Artifacts used in this project included: instruction books, a recital

program, a sign regarding private lesson room assignment, and an advertisement sign outside of two of the studios.

Collect artifacts	May 21 <sup>st</sup> -June 25 <sup>th</sup>
Conduct interviews	May 21 <sup>st</sup> -June 25 <sup>th</sup>
Transcribe interviews	May 22-July 9 <sup>th</sup>
Analyze the data	June 20 <sup>th</sup> -September 30 <sup>th</sup>

*Figure 1.* Project timeline.

### *Trustworthiness*

The credibility or trustworthiness of a qualitative study relies of the researcher as the instrument of qualitative inquiry (Patton 2002). Data collection triangulation, the researcher as the instrument of inquiry, and member checks will be used in the process for collecting data.

Trustworthiness was the determining factor on the validity and reliability of this study. Technical aspects of the interview, such as questions, helped to reduce biased questions, gain objective data, and steer clear of any ethical or personal conflict. In order to gain the goodwill of the participants I made appointments, arrived on time, was respectful, courteous, and extremely thankful. Research design, interview protocol, and different sources of data helped to triangulate the findings of this study.

### *Data Collection Triangulation*

Data Collection Triangulation is the idea that a researcher different data sources in order to cross check findings and strengthen validity or trustworthiness (Patton, 2002). Teacher interviews, student interviews, and artifact analysis will be the data sources of this study.

### *The Researcher as the Instrument of Inquiry*

“A human being is the instrument of qualitative methods” (Patton, 2002, p. 64). Qualitative research relies on the researcher to be the instrument of measurement rather than a particular quantitative device. Patton (2002) states:

The credibility of qualitative methods, therefore, hinges to a great extent on the skill, competence, and rigor of the person doing the fieldwork- as well as things in a person’s life that might prove a distraction (p. 14).

It is the responsibility of the researcher to report all aspects of the project including personal information that may have impacted data collection, analysis, or interpretation (Patton, 2002). Whether the impact causes a positive or negative impact on the research it needs to be reported. Such a report allows the reader to form his own ideas about the project. Clearly, the researcher must have an honest conscience and attempt to remain objective.

### *Member Checks*

Member checking is “...the process of having research participants judge the accuracy and completeness of statements made in the researcher’s report” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 645). The findings were shown to the participants of the

study in order to make sure the results were accurate. In order to complete the member checks each participant was given a copy of his participant profile and the results. Next each participant was asked to respond with any corrections or revisions to the quotes used in the results.

### *Analysis*

The analysis of the data seeks to understand the experience of the participants from both the neosis and neomi perspectives. I used my judgement as the instrument of inquiry to determine which of the two perspectives, neosis or neomi, would be the most appropriate for any given participant response.

Another important aspect of the analysis is my own personal journey as a private studio-based music teacher in both the private and institutional settings. As a child, I also participated as a student in a private studio setting, which I greatly enjoyed and appreciated.

As the idea for this project grew (and continues to grow) I was motivated to produce an original contribution to individuals that choose a career path as private studio-based music teachers. In addition those actively involved in private studio-based music teaching, I wanted to provide music students interested in a private studio-based music teaching career with a strategic guide to recruiting and retaining students in a private studio, which is the essence of the gig. Simple economics show us that in a private setting more students generate more revenue for the private studio-based music teacher.

After all the data was collected and transcribed the process for analysis began. The first step was to create a case-study type profile for each teacher in order to compare and contrast the unique characteristics of each teacher. Secondly, I reviewed each teacher interview, student interview, and artifacts in order to find common themes and threads associated with recruitment and retention. When reviewing the transcriptions I made note of key words that derived from participant responses to questions and statements made without prompt. Clearly having one participant make a comment was not strong enough to stand alone as a theme, but as common ideas emerged it became apparent certain ideas, articulated by one or more of the methods of data collection, were considered solid. A particular idea was considered to be solid when two or more instances arose in multiple interviews.

When deemed appropriate ideas of a less than solid standing were admitted when the researcher felt the method may be valid, but lacked proper support due to the limitations of the participant population or the availability of tangible artifacts



## CHAPTER IV

### PARTICIPANT PROFILES

During the interview process it became obvious that each teacher participating in the project was unique. In order to understand each teacher's viewpoint participant profiles have been completed. Pseudonyms were used for each participant in order to maintain anonymity.

#### *Mr. Arbutus*

Mr. Arbutus currently teaches at a private studio-based lessons facility attached to a music retail store in a mid-sized Midwestern city with a population around 60,000 people. Of all the participants Mr. Arbutus has the most years of experience as a private studio-based instructor with 40 years, 23 of which have been spent at the current location. Prior to the beginning of his engagement with the music retail store Mr. Arbutus taught privately in his own home and in the homes of his students. The retail store provided a meeting place of convenience and the ability to schedule lessons every half-hour back to back, without scheduling time to drive to the next house. Mr. Arbutus also stated "people were more willing to drive to the private lessons facility than his home" (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 1, 2010).

In addition to teaching private lessons Mr. Arbutus also oversees the private lessons facility as the coordinator. Responsibilities for this position include collecting the studio rent from each of the teachers and assigning new students to a teacher. He performs at a variety of churches in the area nearly every Sunday of the year. Also he has provided his musical services for a few weddings and funerals each

year. During his younger years he performed at various places he called “the Holiday Inn/Country Club circuit” (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 1, 2010).

Mr. Arbutus began taking private studio-based music lessons in piano when he was five and began to learn the trumpet at age six . At the age of 12, following a move from a relatively urban area to a rural area, he began to study piano and trumpet with professors at the local university. He pursued his musical studies throughout high school and one year in college. His collegiate education was interrupted by serving his country in the Marine Corps. Some years later, at the age of 48 Mr. Arbutus returned to the very university where he studied piano in his youth and completed a bachelor’s degree in music education. His primary instruments were voice and piano. His minor or secondary instrument was the trumpet.

Following the completion of his bachelor’s degree Mr. Arbutus completed several hours toward a Master’s degree and began teaching in the public schools. Over the past several years his school district has made many budget cuts that ultimately included the music program he was leading.

Mr. Arbutus stated, “I want to give children a positive experience in music” (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 1, 2010). Providing children with a positive in experience in music may lead to adults understanding that music has a place in education.

Currently Mr. Arbutus teaches between 26 and 28 lessons per week, but maintains that there is a great deal of fluctuation in his numbers. He said, “I’ve had students of three or four years just quit coming” (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 1, 2010).

Mr. Arbutus provides instruction in piano, organ, voice, trumpet, and French horn. He considers piano, voice, and trumpet to be his strongest instruments in performance and teaching but feels equipped to provide instruction in any common band instrument to beginning students. Mr. Arbutus enjoys teaching classical piano genres but will adjust his focus to suit older students or those interested in other genres of music. When teaching voice Mr. Arbutus focuses on teaching the student the proper techniques of singing in order help students enjoy many years of singing. He is accepting of most genres but does not provide instruction for the country-western genre.

*Mr. Whistler*

When asked how long Mr. Whistler has been teaching private studio-based lessons, he replied, “35 years” (Mr. Whistler, Interview 1, 2010). He began taking lessons at a private teaching studio when he was approximately 12 years old and continued to take lessons until he went to study music in college. After a year of studying in college he returned to the same private studio from his youth and began teaching one day a week. Over the years this position progressed from teaching one day a week to three days a week and eventually, after Mr. Whistler graduated from college, became full-time.

After eleven years of teaching at the private studio he decided that he would teach out of his home. Paying studio rent and having people particularly interested in his private studio eventually would lead to his departure from the private studio. At this time Mr. Whistler was performing as a substitute musician with the local

symphony orchestra, playing for church services, and performing with a jazz-fusion group. Over the course of his studies and the professional work Mr. Whistler had a collection of instruments that also allowed him the possibility of moving his practice out of the studio. Since 1990 Mr. Whistler has maintained a strong presence as one of the premier teachers in his area.

Using electronic musical equipment and recording equipment is one unique twist in Mr. Whistler's private studio-based teaching career. The origin of this particular twist began during his study of music education. An early goal of Mr. Whistler was to learn how to play all the instruments so he could record himself playing his own compositions. When synthesizers became widely used he adopted them into his studio because it allowed him to easily produce recordings of his own compositions without performing all the instruments. A modern day manifestation of this unique twist is to have a student record his or her performance of the instruments contained in a Samba Batucada.

Mr. Whistler has completed a bachelor's degree in music education and a master's in music performance, electronic music, and composition. Several years after the completion of the master's degree he spent a semester working on a doctorate. Work on the doctorate was aborted due to his commitment to supporting his family, his dedication to private studio-based teaching, and his career as a performer. In addition to formal academic studies Mr. Whistler also took lessons with a percussionist in the local symphony orchestra that would lead to the possibility of serving as an extra or substitute percussionist with the orchestra.

In addition to teaching private studio-based lessons in his home Mr. Whistler has spent time teaching at one small university for three years and approximately 11 years at a mid-sized university with a reputable school of music.

When I visited with Mr. Whistler it was apparent that his instrument collection had grown to a great size. It was visually obvious that all the traditional percussion instruments were contained within the studio. When asked, “which instruments do you teach?” he laughed and said, “it would be easier to say what I don’t teach and that’s steel drums” (Mr. Whistler, Interview 1, 2010). Having a large collection of instruments also allows Mr. Whistler to assist students with the music assigned to them by their school band program.

Mr. Whistler maintains a network of contacts that include area band directors of middle school and high school band programs. The schools in his immediate area require that all students entering sixth grade band be enrolled in private studio-based music lessons. A list of prospective instructors is given to the students. Mr. Whistler stated that his name was on the top of the list.

Students begin the journey of private lessons after completing an interview in which they are asked to play various rhythms and fundamental aspects of the instruments. The interview is not a talent-based audition. Mr. Whistler states, “I’m more interested in what they do when they screw up than how well they play it” (Mr. Whistler, Interview 1, 2010). In this process Mr. Whistler monitors the students response and make suggestions in order to determine the compatibility between the instructor and the prospective student.

Mr. Whistler maintains a full schedule of between 60 and 65 private students year round. Each student receives one half-hour lesson per week. More specifically Mr. Whistler's general workday begins at 3:30 pm and concludes at 9:00 pm. This type of schedule is maintained six days a week, but in order to make room for make-up or missed lessons Mr. Whistler also works on Sunday. His career also includes recording for a large publishing company, performances with the local chamber orchestra, as well as performing at various churches and other venues.

*Mr. Cypress*

When compared to his counterparts Mr. Cypress has the least amount of experience in terms of years but up until this point his career has been quite colorful. In his nearly six years of experience he has taught at several different locations including: a community arts programs at his undergraduate university, a music retail store, and a community arts center. The current location for instruction is a non-profit (501c3) organization that is in the early stages of building a private lessons center. Mr. Cypress is a guitar teacher and the executive director at this location.

Mr. Cypress became interested in music around the age of 10 and began taking lessons shortly after the purchase of his first guitar. His first instructor was an employee of the store where the guitar was purchased. He participated in his elementary and middle school band programs as a trombone and tuba player. From age 11 to age 18, Mr. Cypress consistently received private instruction in guitar.

During these lessons Mr. Cypress feels that he learned the basic fundamentals and well as developed a love and a passion for music.

After graduating high school Mr. Cypress attended a large mid-western university in a rural setting for one year. The next year he transferred to a smaller university in an urban setting to pursue a degree in guitar performance. During his years spent in college he played guitar in jazz combos, rock bands, and church praise bands. Often times the gigs that Mr. Cypress played were set up by the director of jazz studies at the university.

After college Mr. Cypress moved back to his hometown, in which he currently resides, to pursue music as a career. His first teaching venue was at a local music retail store of which he later became an employee. He also began to form and participate in various bands in the area as well.

Mr. Cypress's experience teaching and working for the local retail music store. At the store he sold instruments, moved stock from the warehouse to the store, and taught guitar lessons. He decided that in order to further his career that he needed to leave the store because the owner's policies were not always the most ethical. The store owner at one time told Mr. Cypress, "the only reason I have teachers in the store is to bring in customers..." (Mr. Cypress, Interview 1, 2010). Mr. Cypress feels that he is "not a lure" and eventually saw that this was not the ideal teaching situation.

After the music store experience became less than desirable Mr. Cypress began to transition himself and his students to a community arts center located in

the same town. At this venue Mr. Cypress felt that the pay was better, the work environment was healthy, and facilities were of greater quality. Eventually Mr. Cypress left the previous venue to explore the life as a performing artist, a private studio-based teacher, and the role of executive director at new lessons center.

Mr. Cypress believes that private studio-based music teachers need to have a passion and love for music and teaching. His motivation for teaching privately is more than just to make a living but to give back to the community. He stated, "I see how (my) love of music has shaped my life and the decisions I've made and where I am right now; and I definitely like to encourage and help others discover and grow that love of music..." (Mr. Cypress, Interview 1, 2010). By teaching young students Mr. Cypress is able to "...contribute something to (the) community of musicians and artists..." (Mr. Cypress, Interview 1, 2010).

Mr. Cypress is able to balance a career that includes a regular performance schedule with several bands, teaching approximately 25 lessons per week, and serving as the part-time executive director at his current teaching location.

In the area of private instruction Mr. Cypress believes that flexibility of both the teacher and the student is very important. Teaching lessons helps Mr. Cypress to earn a decent pay rate – more than delivering pizzas or something similar – and "it gives (him) the freedom to go out and play gigs every weekend." (Mr. Cypress, Interview 1, 2010). Mr. Cypress spends on average about 3-4 hours a day five days a week for each component of his career.



Mr. Cypress does not really have an interest in returning to a music retail store because he feels that the lessons are “secondary” to the goals of the retail store. Teaching at home is also something that does not fit Mr. Cypress’s life because he feels that because he has roommates that teaching at home would be inconsiderate.

The first community arts center would close during slow points of the year, which was not an ideal situation for Mr. Cypress. Therefore when another opportunity presented itself Mr. Cypress felt confident that he could better his situation. One challenge presented by the new venue is getting the lessons center off the ground and making progress, which has been halted by issues with the telephone and advertising.

*Mr. Stanley*

Mr. Stanley has been involved with teaching private studio-based lessons for quite a long time, more than 30 years. The experience of Mr. Stanley is quite remarkable. First he received basic instruction in percussion from the band director at the local school he attended. Next, after exhausting the knowledge of his first instructor, he took lessons with a high school student. This experienced proved to be quite valuable because when the high school student graduated and moved to another town to attend college he became the local percussion teacher. At age 13 he began to teach his peers out of his home. By the time he was 15 years old, Mr. Stanley was regularly teaching 15 students a week. With regard to the occupation,

he stated, "I felt like it was an easy way to make money...and that (teaching) came easy for me" (Mr. Stanley, Interview 1, 2010)

After a while as Mr. Stanley progressed in his instruction of others he also began to study at one of the state's most reputable percussion studios. Mr. Stanley took his lessons from the percussion studio and began to use it in his own way. Some of the things he learned about were which method books and techniques were appropriate for the percussion instruments.

Following his high school graduation Mr. Stanley enrolled into a mid-sized university in a town with a population nearing 60,000 people. During the first two years of study Mr. Stanley became increasingly interested in playing the drumset for rock, jazz, fusion, and other groups. After two and a half years Mr. Stanley left college to pursue a performing career that included touring.

After life as a performing and touring musician, Mr. Stanley moved back to his hometown and picked up the same teaching career he had began many years prior. In addition to teaching, Mr. Stanley became the manager of a local music store that serviced the schools in his area. During this time Mr. Stanley was able to establish contacts and form relationships with area band directors at the schools. Because of his prior work and his position as the manager of a music store he was able to pick up more students.

Over the course of his career, Mr. Stanley has expanded his skill set to different areas in order increase and stabilize his income. His work now includes teaching private lessons at three schools, composing and arranging music for winter

drumline and marching band, teaching jazz band, and owning a music retail business. Currently, Mr. Stanley has 15 students at location A, six at location B, and 4 at location C. It is amazing that Mr. Stanley is able to teach approximately 25 private lessons a week while maintaining his other activities.

Mr. Stanley chooses to work with a select group of students at the various schools. All of his students are participants in the band programs at the public schools. He teaches a variety of percussion instruments that are used in bands, orchestras, percussion ensembles, marching band, and winter drumline. Keyboard percussion instruments as well as timpani, snare drum, and drumset are the instrument in which students can receive instruction.

During this current part of his life Mr. Stanley has been actively involved with the area schools for a little over 20 years. He mainly travels within a 30-mile radius from his home.

After Mr. Stanley decided to step away from college to pursue other interests, he began touring with an act signed by RCA Records. Now he considers himself a “week-end warrior”, meaning that he teaches during the week and maintains a freelance career as a performing musician. Mr. Stanley attributes much of success and sustainability of his career to the fact that he is one of only a few percussionists or percussion teachers in his immediate area.

## CHAPTER V

### RESULTS

#### *Recruitment*

Each studio-based music teacher completed one interview that focused the attention to the recruitment of students. For the purposes of this project recruitment was not seen as a strategic placement of specific points along the way that snare potential recruit, but an organic, breathing entity that moves at different speeds and subtleties. Recruitment can be active and aggressive as well as passive and subtle. No one strategy is a golden nugget, but each idea surrounding recruitment is constantly working in different gears. It can be broken down further into both the active and passive embodiments. As specific aspects of each participant's outlook it was further broken down in to themes both active and passive elements emerged. Each theme is a perceived component that combines with both individually and simultaneously with others in order to fuel the phenomenon associated with recruitment. Each participant's comments are a slice of reality, as they perceive it. In some instances they have a similar perception of the phenomenon while other instances are very different. It is important that we point out the similarities in order to begin to reveal how recruitment and retention is perceived to work.

*Networking "Word of Mouth".* Simply put the phrase, word of mouth, is a slang phrase used to describe the process by which information is informally passed from one individual to another. Furthermore, it consists almost exclusively in the

spoken conversation. A clear example of this in a general setting would be a person telling an individual directly that he or she is providing a service during a conversation. The recipient of the information then would pass along that information through verbal contact with her family, friends, etc.

Mr. Cypress sees word of mouth as a way to advertise without spending a large amount of money. Being the least experienced private studio-based music teacher participating in this study Mr. Cypress indicated that he did not have a large budget for advertising, but he did rely on other people to help spread the message that he was providing private studio-based lessons that focused specifically on guitar. A social or business network can be relied upon in the event that no other resource is available to the private studio-based music teacher.

Mr. Arbutus explains “word of mouth” very simply by illustrating a hypothetical conversation between himself and a prospective student. “Would you teach me” ask the hypothetical student. “Yes” Mr. Arbutus replied (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 2, 2010). In a similar interview in order to show how tied into the community he is, Mr. Stanley simply stated, “they know me” as a way to indicate that he was widely known. (Mr. Stanley, Interview 2, 2010). A private studio-based teacher can use the informal nature of word of mouth to tell others that he has a private studio-based teaching career when it is appropriate in a social conversation.

The information can be passed from a current student to his or her peers as expressed by Mr. Cypress.

You know a kid brings his guitar into school and plays something and wows the class and other kids see that and think, wow I wish I could do that and maybe they already thought that they could do that; and they see there is someone else their age doing it not just some famous person on TV and that's when it crystallizes. (Mr. Cypress, Interview 2, 2010)

This type of instance clearly works in favor of Mr. Cypress and the other participants. To make this idea more concrete Mr. Cypress said, "I've seen it several times when I get a kid in for guitar lessons and then within a couple of months I've got 4 or 5 of his or her friends taking lessons from me too" (Mr. Cypress, Interview 2, 2010). Furthermore he continued, "over the last year most of my new students have just come from referrals from other students" (Mr. Cypress, Interview 2, 2010). The interest in taking music lessons can be generated by one student expressing his musical talents to others even if they are not actively trying to do so.

Mr. Whistler also shares in a similar experience with how students find out he is teaching private studio-based lessons. He stated:

The majority of my students already have a friend who is studying. And, so, they know what I'm like and what I do. So, it's just most of the time the students will say I was referred by so and so. (Mr. Whistler, Interview 2, 2010)

It can be advantageous to the teacher to have students that communicate information about private lessons to other students and their families.

When a student becomes interested in taking music lessons their parents might be unaware of how to find a private studio-based music teacher. Some in this quandary will place phone calls to other parents and ask them questions about their son or daughter's participation in music lessons. Mr. Cypress recalled an instance where this was applicable and said:

So of course in the situation of even getting the kid into lessons they just try to find a friend of that kid who plays, talk to their parents, you know and if they are having a positive experience with me they think 'well I'll just take him to that guy then. (Mr. Cypress, Interview 2, 2010)

Communication between the parents of current students and prospective students is another common occurrence of word of mouth being perceived by a private studio-based music teacher.

A student's contact with his or her peers is not the only way that word of mouth was perceived, it also included the parents and grandparents of potential students. Mr. Arbutus said, "I have a lot of students whose parents, grandparents, I guess now, know me...and they either want lessons from me or they want their children or grandchildren to have lessons with me" (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 2, 2010). It was not clear exactly how a person got to know Mr. Arbutus, but it was clearly an important aspect of how word of mouth works.

*Location.* The venue at which the private studio-based music teacher can help him or her be more successful in building a studio of private students. Mr. Arbutus is currently working at a studio that is attached to a music retail store. Mr. Cypress has

had experience working as a teacher and sales associate at a music retail store. Mr. Whistler prior to moving into his home studio taught at a private studio-based lessons facility. Mr. Stanley has also had previous work experience in the music retail business. During the second interview of the interview sequence it became clear that some of the participants benefitted from being part of an organization.

Mr. Arbutus began his career by making house calls and teaching in his home, but moving his practice to into a studio attached to a music retail store has helped him specifically with scheduling. Mr. Arbutus's residence is in a small town nearly 30 minutes away from where he teaches private studio-based lessons. When explaining the move to the music retail store he stated, "It's centrally located" which makes it easier for he and the students to meet one another (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 2, 2010). The location of the teaching venue can make a difference if it is in a more populated area that is central to a larger population of potential students.

More than a matter of convenience working for an organization can help with advertising. Mr. Arbutus commented, "Marsha's Music Store is good about pushing lessons. So they will give coupons...first two lessons free. You get this instrument you get a free lesson or two free lessons or something like that...that sometimes happens in the fall" (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 2, 2010). Another way of advertising is to have a brochure, ad, or television commercial. Mr. Cypress in recalling his experience with Cobblestone Community Arts Center recanted:

It helps to be attached to some organization because they usually are putting the word out too... Parents saw in a Cobblestone brochure that they were



offering private lessons in voice, guitar, piano, and violin; And so I've gotten students that way through the entity that I'm working for advertising it somehow. (Mr. Cypress, Interview 2, 2010)

Working for an organization that has a budget for advertising is another perceptible component of the recruitment phenomenon. From the teacher's perspective the organization to which they belong is working on behalf of them.

Although Mr. Whistler has been teaching out of his home for many years, he remains aware of other organizations and the benefits related to being employed at a retail store or community arts center. He said:

I think like Camelot Music Center... I've had several former students that have taught there. They don't have to advertise because Camelot Music Center will get a call... they are not calling for an individual per se. So unless you are with an institution...that can recruit for you, yeah you've got to beat some bushes (Mr. Whistler, Interview 2, 2010).

Clearly his many years of experience in his geographical location and working relationships with former students help him to be aware of other teachers and organizations in his immediate area.

Working for an active organization in a location that is centralized combined with the resources to advertise can be advantageous for a private studio-based music teacher. A music store, community arts center, or other similar organization may be passive effort because the organization not the teacher is putting in the effort in the form of commercials, brochures, etc. to draw students into lessons.

*Reputation.* A private studio-based music teacher may draw more students if the merit of his work is spread around the community. A good reputation is a positive knowledge of someone's characteristic and invariably seems to positively impact a private studio. The passive nature of how a reputation type of phenomenon works is the key difference when compared with word of mouth. While word of mouth transmissions of information is very similar in construct, reputation may take many years to build. This project discovered how a positive reputation can help a private studio-based music teacher attract potential students.

Three of the participants in this project had over 20 years of private studio-based teaching experience. As time has passed each teacher seemingly lessened the attempt to actively implement strategies to recruit students. Mr. Whistler simply stated, "I don't recruit..." as a way to show that he does not actively recruit, but that his reputation alone attracts attention (Mr. Whistler, Interview 1, 2010). As the interview sequence progressed it became evident that Mr. Whistler and the other teachers have channels by which they are able to recruit new students.

Both Mr. Arbutus and Mr. Stanley have taught two generations of students. The first generation was generally the parents and the second generation was their offspring. In some cases a couple will have multiple children and the private studio-based teacher will have all the children in for private lessons at one time or another.

Mr. Stanley stated:

I've been at these schools for so long that a lot of these kids are second and third generation band kids and their parents. Some of them, I've

had their parents in band and so they know, you know, that I give private lesson for the most part. (Mr. Stanley, Interview 2, 2010).

This can be related to the wealth of private studio-based teaching experience combined with his ample presence as an ensemble director, drum-line instructor, and other supplemental instruction he may provide for public schools.

Mr. Whistler has a large list on contacts that includes area band directors. For many years Mr. Whistler has taught private percussion lessons to students that participate in elementary, middle school, and high school bands. One example of his stellar reputation came about in an interview with his student Davie.

I know from my band director, all the band directors that I've had, they all are very familiar with Mr. Whistler. The majority of percussion players around here middle school and high school go to Mr. Whistler. Most of the band directors I've encountered are familiar with him. Most percussionists that I have been around go take lessons from him. (Davie, Interview, 2010)

Davie's perception clearly shows us that the reputation of the teacher is a important component of the recruitment phenomena. Furthermore, as a student of Mr. Whistler, there is an expectation that comes with his experience.

In both Davie and Elizabeth's interview it was found that one or both of their parents had previous knowledge of the teacher they would ultimately study with. When asked about how he got involved in private studio-based lessons Davie said, "My mom...I think she arranged the first lesson and then I met him at the first lesson" (Davie, Interview, 2010). Similarly Elizabeth stated, "I think my dad has

known him longer than my mother, but, yeah I think they have known him for a little bit longer than me” (Elizabeth, Interview, 2010). In both instances the student’s parents knew the teacher and possibly his reputation because he had been teaching for many years.

Mr. Whistler’s reputation with area band directors has been another sterling component of his success as a private studio-based music teacher. Part of what strengthens the bond between Mr. Whistler and the band directors is his willingness to help students prepare the music to be played in band. “The band directors know that they can send their students with their music in if there’s a problem and we’ll work on it” (Mr. Whistler, Interview 2, 2010). Having the willingness to help with the student’s music from band proves that he is dedicated to all-around general percussion instruction and helping students to achieve success in their school band program. He said, “So, they are not just coming here to learn rock beats on drum set, but, um, but they can actually play the music they have to do in band” (Mr. Whistler, Interview 2, 2010). It is evident that the willingness to take interest in the material from their programs can help to build a strong relationship through which students can be funneled to teachers, such as Mr. Whistler or Mr. Stanley.

The reputation of the teacher can extend to such people as students, band directors, and other private studio-based music teachers. Students come to Mr. Arbutus from a variety of channels. One such channel is from other private studio-based music teachers. He said, “I have other teachers that send students to me” because of a summer vacation or another opportunity came about and “...sometimes

it's a surprise...because you didn't think you had impressed that person to that degree" (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 2, 2010). One clear quality thought to describe a good reputation is consistency. A teacher that can be present for each scheduled lesson with as few interruptions seem more likely to have a good reputation with the parents of current students. Mr. Whistler says, "Consistency of week-to-week lesson is much more important" (Mr. Whistler, Interview 2, 2010). Not having a consistent regular lesson "messes up student's schedules" and "their parent's don't care for it..." (Mr. Whistler, Interview 2, 2010). This type of information could be passed between parents of current and prospective students.

The topic of appearance and enthusiasm arose in a discussion with Mr. Whistler. He recanted a story from some 30 years ago that personifies the appearance of another percussion teacher he observed. During a visit to a local drum shop Mr. Whistler passed through the waiting room for percussion lessons. A child was sitting outside of a teaching studio waiting for a lesson when all of a sudden a man came from behind the door and said, "Are you Johnny?" The child replied, "yeah". The man said, "Well, I'm your teacher. Come on." Not only were the teacher's actions impersonal his manner of dress was an ensemble of a torn t-shirt, overalls, and no shoes. A lack of respect, on the teacher's part, for himself and the student was apparent in Mr. Whistler's opinion. Anything can positively or negatively mold a reputation. "You've got to think about it like any other job" he explained, you must always put your best foot forward in order to help foster the best possible reputation (Mr. Whistler, Interview 2, 2010).

Mr. Whistler even once had a new student tell him that a family was fed up with a previous teacher. During a lesson the teacher laid down on the floor and fell asleep during the lesson. Not only did the teacher sleep through the lesson he charged the family for the time the child sat in the studio. This clearly is not an advantageous strategy for building a positive reputation.

*Presence in Schools.* Being present or maintaining some type of presence in a middle or high school was also discovered to increase the likelihood of building and maintaining enough private students to consider a private studio successful. Through a network of contacts a private studio-based music teacher can make appearances and contact students at public and private schools.

A private studio-based music teacher that maintains an open working relationship with music teachers in a public or private school setting seemingly opens the door to a variety of possibilities. Mr. Stanley teaches private studio-based music lessons to students at three high schools within a 30-mile radius of his home. Private studio-based teaching is only one component of his overall career. In addition to teaching lessons Mr. Stanley directs percussion and jazz programs at three schools. Most recently he will be helping to teach beginning band students at a middle school that feeds into a high school where he teaches.

Part of maintaining an active presence at each school is attending concerts and other activities. "I go to all the concerts....all the fundraisers" says Mr. Stanley (Mr. Stanley, Interview 2, 2010). During these events and activities students get to

see Mr. Stanley as an active participant in the school music program. Students and parents benefit from getting to know Mr. Stanley through his involvement.

Mr. Stanley's presence goes far beyond just showing up for concerts and activities. The middle school and high school band directors often travel to elementary schools in order to raise awareness regarding the music program. Mr. Stanley "go(es) with the band director first to the classroom" in order to help and be present for the beginning of the recruiting process for band (Mr. Stanley, Interview 2, 2010). A local music retail store will host an evening for the students to try-out different instruments. At this time Mr. Stanley is looking to find the best possible students to participate in the percussion program. He is able to "have a one on one experience" with the student and take notes about each child in order to determine which students may be best suited to play percussion instruments (Mr. Stanley, Interview 2, 2010). Being present from what could possibly be a student's very first experience with percussion instruments seems to work well for Mr. Stanley.

Mr. Whistler has reached a point in his career where time is truly jam packed with back to back lessons six days a week from 3:00 pm until 9:00pm. When that is combined with his performance schedule, practice time, and other activities it does not leave much time left over for being involved with area schools. In the past he "...used to have more time and (he) would go and put together some percussion ensembles at the middle school" (Mr. Whistler, Interview 2, 2010).

Although appearances at local schools are not as commonplace as they once were for Mr. Whistler he maintains a presence on the list of percussion instructors

that teach private studio-based music lessons and through his students. A key ingredient to his success is his willingness to help students with their band music for concerts and auditions. Although he may not be making regular appearances at local schools his students are auditioning for and participating in marching band, concert band, jazz band, percussion ensemble, winter drum-line, and orchestra. His presence speaks through the participation and achievement of his students.

*Performance.* One very simple way that students become interested in music is by attending a live performance. There are a variety of different types of performances that people can attend which include recitals, ensemble concerts, and visits to the classroom. During these events students get a chance to see a live performance. Such an event can awaken the desire to play music in some students.

Mr. Stanley often takes ensembles such as jazz band and winter drum-line to visit elementary and middle schools. The winter drum-line is a very active group that performs for “half-time shows...concerts...and elementary students” (Mr. Stanley, Interview 2, 2010). Mr. Stanley feels that “the winter drum-line is a great recruiting tool” because the ensemble makes use of non-traditional band instruments such as guitar, bass guitar, and synthesizers which work well with the show design. All of these elements combine to entice prospective students to become interested in performance opportunities. It is very common for members of the ensembles taught by Mr. Stanley to also take private lessons.

Elizabeth is a student that studies privately with Mr. Stanley. During an interview she recalled one of Mr. Stanley’s visits that included a short



demonstration on drum-set. Attending concerts was another way that Elizabeth discovered her interest in music. "When I used to go to my sister's concerts...I used to watch (the) jazz band; like the drummer and stuff" (Elizabeth, Interview, 2010). Mr. Stanley said, "if you pull a drum-set out there and do a couple of crashes and fast little licks...they'll go crazy" (Mr. Stanley, Interview 2, 2010). There seems to be some relevance between this Mr. Stanley and Elizabeth's statements.

One of Mr. Stanley's strategies is to use percussion instruments that "hook" students, such as the drum-set. Because it is a mainstream instrument the drum-set is a better choice because students "can relate to the music videos they see" (Mr. Stanley, Interview 2, 2010). One particular instrument that seemed to be a bad choice for a demonstration was bells. He said, "For some reason bells and boys at a young age they think it's a sissy instrument" (Mr. Stanley, Interview 2, 2010).

Mr. Cypress thinks that a private studio could benefit from planning "some kind of event or an instance when you are going to be able to let a lot of people know what you are doing" (Mr. Cypress, Interview 2, 2010). In addition to his teaching practice he is also serving as the executive director for his organization. A current project of Mr. Cypress is to plan an event that includes a student recital or concert as a fundraiser and an outreach to the community. He plans to have posters and displays that provide information about the organization.

Mr. Cypress, Mr. Stanley, and Mr. Whistler have students take part in recitals. These recitals generally are to provide an outlet for achievement, but sometimes they inspire students to take lessons. Mr. Cypress recalled a conversation with a

parent that ultimately led to his perception that recitals can help to bring in new students. He said:

Having recitals and if some of these kids have their friends come then. I've had kids say to me, 'man I want to do that now.' You know, or their parents come to me and say, 'so and so saw, was at, went with his friend who takes guitar lessons with you went to this recital that all of them were playing and saw him play and he thinks he wants to get a guitar and start.'" (Mr. Cypress, Interview 2, 2010)

There were no other comments about the efficacy of recitals helping to recruit, but later we will see how recitals are used to measure achievement.

### *Retention*

Without students a private studio-based music teacher's career is not viable, per se. The power to achieve success is reliant on the teacher's innate or learned ability to adequately connect with students. The private studio-based music teachers must have a working knowledge of the students that choose to visit for private lessons. Without delving too deeply into a philosophical argument, is it possible for someone to be a private studio-based music teacher if they currently have no students?

A great amount of variance regarding the idea of successful retention was found. While for some several months to several years was considered successful, others seemed pleased with only a few weeks of their best effort. In two instances the private studio-based music teacher was faced with a student that had immediate

short-term goals. Only a short period of instruction may be needed for a short-term student to adequately achieve the skills needed to reach his goal. More commonly the private studio-based music teachers perceived or assumed that a student's attendance was open-ended unless previously discussed.

Retention is the term used to describe the continued attendance of private studio-based music lessons by a student. In order to achieve an amount of success a private studio-based music teacher must have students that return to lessons on a regular basis. There are several factors that impact whether or not a student continues to pursue private studio-based instruction.

Each teacher seemed to have his own idea about what characterized successful retention. Mr. Arbutus's comment "knowing that is may last 6 months...6 years...or one lesson" shows a great amount of variance (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 3, 2010). Mr. Cypress also sees a wide amount of variance by simply saying, "The typical life span...that varies a lot" (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). Later on in the interview Mr. Cypress expressed that "a student who...makes the commitment and wants to stick with it at least up to a couple of years..." which draws a connection to commitment and retention.

Mr. Whistler had a different view of retention when compared with Mr. Arbutus or Mr. Cypress. Throughout the span of his career Mr. Whistler stated "Retention. I've never had a problem" (Mr. Whistler, Interview 3, 2010). Generally Mr. Whistler will take a student as a fifth or sixth grader and teach them until they graduate high school nearly 70 percent of the time. Many students leave lessons for

various reasons and even take lessons with other teachers at Mr. Whistler's suggestion. To summarize his feelings about retention Mr. Whistler said:

I don't think about it. It's not on my sights. If I taught to make sure that I didn't loose students that's the wrong focus. I don't worry about it. If I had to worry about an income and generating students and such I think that would definitely take away from what I do for the teaching. (Mr. Whistler, Interview 3, 2010)

His focus on teaching the students and fostering an environment for learning percussion instruments is astounding and has proved to be a successful component of his teaching career.

*Fun and Enjoyment.* When asked why students continued attending lessons the answers were very similar. The similarity that was shared unanimously by all the participants was that lessons were fun and enjoyment. Mr. Cypress said "the biggest thing that makes anybody stay committed to anything is probably that it is interesting and in some respect is fun and enjoyable to them" (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). Mr. Arbutus said, "I try to make it fun..." (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 3, 2010). "I try to make it exciting, I try to make it fun" says Mr. Whistler (Interview 3, 2010). Elizabeth initially decided to take lessons because she "...though it would be fun..." (Elizabeth, Interview, 2010). Davie continues to come to lessons because he "(enjoys) playing at the lesson" (Davie, Interview, 2010). This sense of fun and enjoyment are part of what makes the experience memorable and attractive to students and teachers alike.

While the teacher's general effort is to keep the teaching environment fun there are times when private studio-based lessons are not perceived as fun. Mr. Arbutus said, "I hesitate with the term (fun) because there's work involved" (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 3, 2010). The work expected of a private student includes consistently attending lessons, bringing all required materials, and most importantly practicing in preparation for the lesson. Lack of preparation and practice for some students causes Mr. Cypress to "give the same lessons week after week because they are doing nothing" (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). When a student fails to adequately prepare for a lesson "it's no fun for anyone..." he explained (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). Adequate preparation and responsible practice by a student may lead to great fun.

Mr. Stanley operates under the adage that in order for a student to progress and be successful they must consistently practice. He says, "You've got to practice if you want to remain one of my students or it's just not enjoyable for either one of us" (Mr. Stanley, Interview 3, 2010). During my experience as a teaching assistant and private studio-based music instructor it was very difficult to help a student prepare for a recital or performance if they did not consistently practice. In Mr. Stanley's career practice and preparation for various performances have served as "measuring stick" for motivation. (Mr. Stanley, Interview 3, 2010). Students that do not show progression in building strong practice habits often drop out of lessons after a short period of time.

Mr. Whistler noticed that if a student is having fun he “feels like (they) move faster with an easy-going attitude, having fun” Mr. Whistler, Interview 3, 2010). A positive uplifting environment for the student provides a source of inspiration and motivation for the student’s of Mr. Whistler’s private studio. Often Mr. Whistler uses modern well-known websites like YouTube to find videos of music to share with his students. According to his student Davie at the beginning of a lesson Mr. Whistler would “say hello and crack some joke” (Davie, Interview 3, 2010). This added to the aspect of humor and fun in lessons. On the subject of fun and humor Mr. Whistler stated, “ if they are not smiling and laughing, why do it?” (Mr. Whistler, Interview 3, 2010). Fun ultimately is present in his mind and adds to the attractiveness of private studio-based lessons.

It is important for private-studio based music teachers to cultivate an atmosphere of positive energy and fun. One way of keeping in touch is to realize that many students begin lesson because they, like Elizabeth, thought it would be fun. Mr. Cypress said, “I try to teach them how to take it seriously...but at the same time to enjoy it and have fun...” (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). Having this type of mentality may help to foster the aspect of fun in private studio-based lessons. By constantly reminding himself that “...most people are in this (lessons) for fun.” Mr. Cypress is able to maintain a balance between learning and having a good time. Having fun in private studio-based lessons is essential to achieve success.

*Achievement.* Another essential component of a successful private studio-based teacher is the ability to allow, reveal, and provide an environment for

achievement. “Everybody gets to achieve” said Mr. Arbutus “how little that may be” (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 3, 2010). The teachers of this study were able to help students recognize their achievement by providing and encouraging performance opportunities like recitals, solo/ensemble contests, school band, and auditions for various ensembles. These types of opportunities help to keep students motivated and making progress. A motivated student making progress is more likely to continue with private lessons unless matters beyond their control act upon them.

Mr. Whistler and Mr. Stanley are heavily involved with teaching students that participate in school band programs. They encourage and prepare students to perform solo selections for regional and state solo and ensemble contests. Mr. Stanley requires the “younger kids...to take a mallet (keyboard percussion) solo and a snare drum solo” to contest (Mr. Stanley, Interview 3, 2010). Having a performance outlet helps a student to stay motivated and become acquainted with performing in front of an audience.

Mr. Whistler uses the contests in order “set goals” for his students (Mr. Whistler, Interview 3, 2010). These goals include preparing solos for drum-set, snare drum, and marimba. One great benefit of contests is that it involves the parents “because they attend...” and they also “see that their son or daughter is doing well in band” (Mr. Whistler, Interview 3, 2010). Not only does this reveal achievement to the students because they may receive medals or ratings, it also engages the parents, which is very important and will be covered in another paragraph.

Recitals are another performance opportunity for students to demonstrate their abilities and lessons. Also it provides parents with an opportunity to see “a concrete tangible result of what people are paying us (private studio-based music teachers) to do” (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). Recitals help to boost the professional appearance and give students a performance opportunity. Mr. Cypress stated, “if you have kids come in for lessons and you never really give them a performance opportunity they are never going to learn to perform” (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). Recitals allow students to achieve during performance conditions.

Mr. Whistler agrees that performance achievement can be cultivated through recital performance. “That’s why we do recitals. Kids are scared to death to play a solo” (Mr. Whistler, Interview 3, 2010). Overcoming nervousness and stage fright is a goal of recital performance. Also Mr. Whistler feels “that work ethic of working towards a goal and being able to do it” is an important lesson for students (Mr. Whistler, Interview 3, 2010). Understanding work ethic and achieving goals is important not only in music instruction, but to the entirety of a student’s life.

*Teaching Methods.* Subject matter, materials, and delivery all work together to develop a private studio-based music teacher’s teaching methods. Through the experience of teaching each individual participant has developed his own unique methods of teaching. For this project I was not specifically looking for teaching methods that impacted retention, but as the project continued it became obvious that the way a teacher interacts with students could also impact retention.



A student that can play music that interests them emerged as a strategy for several of the participants. Teaching a student in an exciting and interesting way helps keep them motivated to continue with lessons and grow as musicians. According to Mr. Cypress, “There is nothing more exhilarating...than being able to play a song that they really like” (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). Mr. Whistler directly incorporates this into his lessons. He said, “If there is a song they want to learn I will have them try to transcribe the beat...” (Mr. Whistler, Interview 3, 2010). Next Mr. Whistler examines what the students transcription, listens to a recording of the tune, and will even use the internet to find tablature or transcriptions. Working in this way helps to keep the student interested but also as stated by Mr. Cypress “the parents too get a kick out it, hear something recognizable” (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010).

Tailoring the teaching methods to each individual student is an important component that surfaced during an interview with Mr. Arbutus. “I don’t how many students you have, but you don’t teach the same way to students back to back to back to back,” stated Mr. Arbutus “you’ve got to adapt to their method of learning what ever that method is” (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 3, 2010). The flexibility exhibited by Mr. Arbutus perhaps show that each student should be treated as an individual case and that using a uniform teaching approach may not be the best way to motivate students to continue with lessons.

Mr. Cypress uses his “universal” approach to teaching that includes how to read standard notation and tablature for guitar. He teaches them how to count

rhythms and after reaching a “certain point...(he) starts explaining music theory principles to them” (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). By fusing the basic fundamental elements of musical instruction with student interests in popular genres of music Mr. Cypress has created a curriculum that allows a student to progress in both modern and traditional contexts. One particular tactic used by Mr. Cypress is to have a student make a list of “some songs that they like and that they might like to learn to play” (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). The list of songs can show Mr. Cypress what genres of music interest the student and perhaps provide a song that would be at an appropriate level. Information contained in this list is used to build the lessons around each individual student’s interests. Conceptually the list indicates a starting point as well as material for subsequent lessons. Using the list created by the student ultimately helps the teacher relate better with the student.

Another component within the teaching methods comes from the views held by the student. Davie, a student studying with Mr. Whistler, stated that “the majority of the time I didn’t do my assignment and he wouldn’t yell at me” (Davie, Interview, 2010). Rather than suddenly becoming angry or getting upset Mr. Whistler would make mention of the assignment, but ultimately find another technique or idea to work on during the lesson. Later in the interview Davie said, “Most of the time I told him what I wanted to work on” (Davie, Interview, 2010). From Davie’s viewpoint he directed what happening during lessons. Mr. Whistler’s comment “If there is a song they want to learn...I will have them try to transcribe...” clearly shows that room is left for student direction and initiative in lessons (Mr. Whistler, Interview 3, 2010).

*Factors that Impact Retention*

The retention rate for private studio-based music lessons or instruction can be impacted by more than just the interaction between students and teachers.

During the interviews each of the teachers mentioned that other activities including family and sports impacted the longevity of the retention period for some students.

*Distractions.* Often throughout the course of lessons, the student's attention may become diverted causing interruption or cessation of attendance. While each distraction perceived by a private studio-based music teacher may not be considered a negative activity to the student, it does bring about scheduling conflicts with lessons. When asked about the reasons that students quit lessons Mr. Arbutus said that it was "usually due to scheduling" (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 3, 2010). While scheduling other activities often conflicts with scheduled lessons it also conflicts with a student's ability and availability to adequately practice and prepare for lessons.

Often private studio-based music teachers dealt with difficulty surrounding student involvement in team sports such as softball, baseball, and other common sports. Mr. Stanley noticed that "the majority of my students aren't heavily involved in sports..." (Mr. Stanley, Interview 3, 2010). Students that are not involved in sports have more time to dedicate to lessons and practice. Mr. Stanley considers sports as "a huge thing" for his geographical location (Mr. Stanley, Interview 3, 2010). Team sports have been competing with music lessons in the lives of students since Mr. Stanley began teaching lessons. Within the last ten years Mr. Stanley observed

“more girls are involved in sports especially at a younger age” (Mr. Stanley, Interview 3, 2010). More children appear to be participating in team sports both as extracurricular activities and sports clubs.

The level of commitment is very high for students, as young as 10 years old, participating in sports programs. Mr. Cypress is constantly working with students to accommodate hectic schedules that include sports programs. He encourages students to explore the many opportunities presented to them, but can see “destructive sports schedules going on to where these kids don’t even have time to do their school work” (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). For example, Mr. Cypress recounted that he has “students that are playing on 2 and 3 baseball teams while school is going on” (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). A student in this position may leave directly from school to attend a practice followed by a short period in which the parent may bring dinner to the student with only a few moments before the next practice begins. “There is too much commitment required from a lot of school sports for younger kids” Mr. Cypress explained (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). The high level of commitment to team sports programs is a common thing in both Mr. Stanley and Mr. Cypress’s private teaching studios.

Academic and other extracurricular demands placed on students can also prevent students from maintaining a consistent or existent lesson schedule. Mr. Arbutus stated, “I’ve had, especially my upper high school level grades, musical demands on schedules just prevented them from continuing” (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 3, 2010). School music programs can also be just as, if not more,

demanding than sports programs. Thus presenting a challenging decision on the student's behalf that is often made by the parents. Some students that leave lessons may have academic pressure to "be at the top of their class" (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 3, 2010). When schedules become hectic or pressure is applied to various areas of a student's life discontinuing private studio-based music lessons becomes more of a reality.

Distractions often coincide with the normal vacations of the academic calendar, most notably summer vacation. "Summer time they want a break" exclaimed Mr. Arbutus in reference to students that take a leave of absence over the summer (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 3, 2010). Mr. Whistler has one student that for two summers in a row that has "traveled all summer" (Mr. Whistler, Interview 3, 2010). At the conclusion of the summer this particular student has chosen to re-enroll in lessons. Re-enrolling after taking a leave of absence presents difficulty and inconvenience for Mr. Whistler and the student's family. "Another one would be if they are involved in a ton of camps and they just can't fit it in because they are not in town" stated Mr. Whistler in reference to other summer time activities that detract from lesson attendance. Another summer time activity that conflicts with Mr. Whistler's schedule is the local schools band camp. "Well if they are in the Camelot band...the last three weeks of July is all day all night rehearsals" he explained (Mr. Whistler, Interview 3, 2010). Overcoming this arduous schedule presents a unique set of challenges.

In my observation during the interview sequence I noticed that each teacher mostly taught students that were generally school age (10-18 years old), with some exceptions for adult students. Each teacher seemed to favor the idea of students consistently taking lessons year round as it was their experience. "I of course took lessons all year round" stated Mr. Arbutus when discussing summer breaks (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 3, 2010). I could sense an understanding that each teacher would accept a student's decision to take a break, but may fill the time allotted for the lesson with another student.

*Parental Involvement.* In order to keep lessons working seamlessly parental involvement is necessary. A parent can help to ensure that a student attends lessons, is prepared, and serve as a direct channel of communication with the teacher regarding scheduling, progress, and the student's behavior. Having the support and goodwill of parents may positively impact private studio-based lessons with regard to retention. Generally speaking communication between teachers and parents is a positive measure, but at times it can negatively impact a student's achievement in private studio-based lessons.

Mr. Arbutus recalled a story regarding parental involvement and communication. Simply put, the efficacy of parental involvement "depends on the individual (and) the parents" (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 3, 2010). Once during a discussion with a parent about a student's practice habits, the parent attempted to blame Mr. Arbutus for the student's lack of preparation and practice habits. "I tried to explain to the mother that you've got responsibilities when you leave here..." he

then stopped and quoting the parent he said, “My child is not practicing and that just because of you” (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 3, 2010). While this seems to be an example of a negative interaction, most interactions generally have a positive impact on private studio-based lessons.

As evidenced in the previous paragraph many of the interactions between the parent and the private studio-based music teacher revolve around the aspect of preparation and practice. Mr. Cypress deals with some parents that have a negative attitude toward private studio-based music lessons because, they, as children, were forced to take piano lessons and practice. Parents that have had a negative experience with music lessons themselves “don’t make their kids practice” (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). In continuation Mr. Cypress stated:

That kid never gets into the routine of practicing so they never get better.

They never have any fun at it and a lot of the times a lot of people go through the that process and they are in and out in about three or four months...(Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010).

A parent must work with the teacher in order to make sure that consistent preparation and practice is taking place in order for a student to adequately progress in instrumental musical performance.

“Tell a kid they can just brush their teeth if they want to...” stated Mr. Cypress as he draws an analogy between dental hygiene and consistent practice of a musical instrument (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). “By the time (the) kid is old enough or mature enough to know they need to brush their teeth and will want to brush their

teeth to prevent them from falling out it's too late!" (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). Parental involvement for the parents of Mr. Cypress's students includes making sure that their child practices at home. "You can't just tell a five year old or a seven year old and expect them to practice; you have to make them do it..." so that the routine becomes consistent and the student becomes accustomed to practicing (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). Otherwise it is difficult to gage how interested in private studio-based music lessons or how talented a student may be.

Mr. Stanley also conveys his concerns regarding student practicing and preparation with parents. A lack of preparation for solo and ensemble contests, which are generally held in late January, "shows the parents that their child is really not into it" (Mr. Stanley, Interview 3, 2010). After such an occurrence Mr. Stanley will "have a conversation with their parent and tell them I know you are paying a lot of money for these lessons and I'm not sure it's really worth it." Mr. Stanley observed that parents would ultimately control whether or not a student continued lessons and that he was respected by the many of the parents for being honest. Having an open channel of communication between the private studio-based music teacher and the parents is something that may have a heavy impact on the dynamic of private lessons.

Mr. Whistler also notes that good communication with parents can foster a positive experience for the students. "A student that started with me in the third grade... his mom works with him everyday and it's been like clockwork" (Mr. Whistler, Interview 3, 2010). With his mother's assistance this particular student is



able to accomplish “amazing things in a week.” This is yet another example of how parents can help to keep their child motivated and engaged with private studio-based music lessons.

Often both the child and parent do not fully understand what exactly is happening during the lessons. When it comes to routing and consistency of lessons “most students don’t know any better nor do their parents” according to Mr. Whistler. In addition to teaching the students a private studio-based music teacher must also help the parents to properly encourage the child. “If you don’t have the parents helping you out...if you don’t want to put that effort in the result are not going to show up” (Mr. Whistler, Interview 3, 2010).

In summary, parental involvement is an aspect of private studio-based music instruction that can positively or negatively impact the period in which a student is retained by a private studio-based music teacher. Parents with negative attitudes could in some ways cast a dark cloud of negativity around their child’s experience with private studio-based lessons. Parents with positive attitudes often enhance the experience of the student by expressing positive energy and following the instructions of the private studio-based music teacher.

### *The Perception on Retention*

During the interview sequence I discovered that my perception of retention with regard to private studio-based music lessons was often not as obvious to the participants. It seems that a private studio-based teacher would want to take an interest in the retention of the students, but as I found most teachers were more

interested in having students that presented positive progress instead of continuation. Each participant's idea of retention was unique when compared with the other participants.

Mr. Arbutus's perception of retention "is to give the student – it doesn't make any difference the age – to give the student a positive influence" (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 3, 2010). The flow of incoming and outgoing students is often something that "you just go with" (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 3, 2010). Mr. Arbutus tries not to allow himself to be too concerned with recruitment or retention rate because he finds that to be "part of the business" of teaching private studio-based music lessons. Regardless of the duration a student is actively taking lessons Mr. Arbutus seeks to "give them (his) best."

Mr. Cypress's perception is that if a student is interested in music he or she will continue with lessons. He said, "the biggest thing that makes anybody stay committed to anything is probably that it is interesting and in some respects is fun and enjoyable to them" (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). Over the course of his career he has noticed that there is no typical duration for student retention.

Mr. Stanley's perception of retention is that "if they really like the band director and what the program is all about they'll stick around in band and keep taking private lessons" (Mr. Stanley, Interview 3, 2010). Students must maintain a high level of practice and preparation in order to continue lessons with Mr. Stanley because they would otherwise fall away. Mr. Stanley often views a student's urge to discontinue lessons as a sign that they are not interested in music.

“I don’t think about it” stated Mr. Whistler when asked about retention (Mr. Whistler, Interview 3, 2010). He focuses his energy on providing each student with a quality musical education. To clearly illustrate his perception of retention Mr. Whistler stated, “If I had to worry about an income and generating students and such I think that would definitely take away from what I do” (Mr. Whistler, Interview 3, 2010). By focusing on the educational aspect rather than an economic aspect Mr. Whistler is able maintain a successful operation.

## CHAPTER VI

### SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

Private studio-based musical instruction has been a part of life for many successful musicians. In our society we are blessed with many opportunities to learn how to positively express ourselves through a learned behavior, like art or music. Duke, Flowers, and Wolfe (1998) state “Individualized instruction has extensive and rich history, and the long tradition of music apprenticeship has led to the deeply held convictions about the purposes, benefits, and substance of private music study” (Duke, Flowers, and Wolfe 1998, 51). Without private studio-based music teachers helping students to learn about music the art form would not be what it is today.

Wei (2010) provides “provides practical suggestion to help teachers solve these problems” such as scheduling, programming, general communication, and finding support for projects and goals (p. 4). While having information about running a business, rules and procedures from students, billing protocol, interviews for new students, tax issues, practice habits, and teaching strategies are all very relevant to private studio-based music lessons, they are virtually meaningless without the students. Wei does mention the importance of building a good network and a reputation. Flyers, neighborhood bulletin boards, brochures, business cards, and a website are all tools that can be used to advertise your services. Focusing on how to build a network of students is clearly one of the first and foremost tasks to be completed by a new teacher or a teacher that has relocated.

Research shows that recruitment is an important component in other fields of research such as medical studies (Julion, Gross, & Barclay-McLaughlin 2000; Pretoran, Browner, & Lieber 2001; Sexton et al 2003; Sharp, Fitzgibbon, & Schiffer 2008) When examining studies related to musical instruction several ideas pertinent to recruitment and retention emerged (Cutietta & McAllister 1997; Duke, Flowers, & Wolfe 1998; Duke & Henniger 2002; Hamann, Baker, McAllister, & Bauer 2000; Kostka 2002; Rife, Shenk, Lauby, & Lapidus 2001; Speer 1994). The characteristics of students that continued with music lessons began to become more concrete and meaningful (Costa-Giomi 2004; Costa-Giomi, Flowers, & Sasaki 2005; Klinedist 1991; McCarthy 1980). Effective recruitment strategies were discovered when reading relevant studies that specifically focused on recruitment (Albert 2006; Corenblum & Marshall 1998). However, there is little research that focuses on recruitment and retention in the field of private studio-based musical instruction.

#### *Purpose Statement and Research Questions*

The purpose of this study was to examine the perceptions of studio-based music teachers regarding recruitment and retention. Research questions included: (a) How do students and teachers become acquainted with one another? (b) What strategies do private studio-based teachers use to attract students? (c) What factors impact the effectiveness of recruitment and retention strategies used by private studio-based teachers? (d) Why do students choose to begin privately studying music? (e) Why do students discontinue lessons?

*Method*

This study uses a qualitative phenomenological design. Phenomenology is the “study of the world as it appears to individuals when they lay aside the prevailing understandings of those phenomena and revisit their immediate experience of the phenomena” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2007, p. 495). This theoretical framework is the most conducive to discovering the perceptions of private studio-based music teachers with regard to recruitment and retention.

Phenomenological studies work to “make sense of an experience and transform the experience into consciousness, both individually and as shared meaning” (Patton, 2002, 104). This allows the research process to focus on how the participants experience their careers as private studio-based music teachers. During the course of the project the I often identified with each teacher’s perceptions, which allowed me to observe the phenomena from both the inside and outside perspectives.

The preparation and advisement for this project took place on the campus of a state funded public university with approximately 21,000 students. This location was advantageous because the resources available allowed it to function as a hub. All aspects of this study were coordinated through this location. Participant interviews took place in school band rooms, a home studio, a music lesson facility attached to a music retail store, a participant’s home, and through the communication software application Skype.

*Data and Procedures*

Four private studio-based music teachers participated in three semi-structured interviews over the course of a six-week period. During this period two students completed one semi-structured interview in order to find any relationship between the teacher's perceptions and the student's experience or memories. The interviews were processed and transcribed by the researcher and compared with one another in order to find common themes and threads that were relevant to the recruitment and retention of students in private studio-based instruction. Meetings with the teachers and students were scheduled at the convenience of the participant with regard to place and time.

The interviews for this project were of a semi-structured nature (Merriam, 1998). A semi-structured interview leaves room for the researcher and participant to follow the flow of energy during an interview. For example, if the participant makes a statement that is considered interesting to the researcher a follow up question may be asked or a more in depth explanation could be given. An interview protocol was developed using the research questions of the project. During the interviews questions about the participant's comments in both the current and previous interviews arose. All interviews were recorded using the Zoom H4 Handy Recorder and reviewed for analysis.

### *Trustworthiness*

During the research process in order to maintain honesty and reliability the following checks were used: (a) data collection triangulation; (b) accurate accounts of the phenomena from my prospective; and (c) member checks.

### *Analysis*

After all the data was collected and transcribed the process for analysis began. The first step was to create a case-study type profile for each teacher in order to compare and contrast the unique characteristics of each teacher. I reviewed each teacher interview, student interview, and artifacts in order to find common themes and threads associated with recruitment and retention.

### *Data Triangulation*

Data triangulation is the idea that a researcher uses different sources of data in order to cross check findings and strengthen trustworthiness or validity (Patton, 2002). For this project comments made by participants and my perspective were combined to strengthen themes that emerged during the data analysis. Having a participant make a comment may not be strong enough to stand alone as them, but as common ideas emerged it became apparent that certain ideas, articulated by one or more of the methods of data collection, were considered solid. Ideas that were not corroborated by at least two data sources were omitted because they lacked proper support.



### *Summary of Findings and Discussion*

*Word of Mouth.* Simply put the phrase word of mouth is a slang phrase used to describe the process by which information is informally passed from one individual to another. Although seemingly none of the literature allowed room for the oral transmission of information, or word of mouth, it was perhaps one of the easiest, most convenient, and cost effective methods used by all of the participating private studio-based music teachers at some point in his career. Perhaps the simple stripped down transmission of information has eluded researchers up until this point, although it seemed to be quite an underground hit for this project.

Mr. Cypress, the participant with the least experience, seemed to rely heavily on word of mouth more so than the other participants. The growth of his private studio has seen many instances where one student has begun lessons and “then within a couple of months” a few of that student’s friends would also be studying with Mr. Cypress (Mr. Cypress, Interview 2, 2010) This type of interaction is seemingly an informal system of referrals. By having students that are passionate and inspired by his teaching, Mr. Cypress has seen an influx of new students.

In a more figurative manner Mr. Stanley simply stated, “they know me” as a way to indicate that word of mouth has been a very important aspect of his private studio-based teaching endeavors. Over the past 30 years of private studio-based teaching he has taught two generations of private students and the third generation is coming up in the not too distant future.

Mr. Arbutus also has had a similar experience with teaching multiple generations. Although he has not mentioned teaching three generations of a family, he does maintain that a child's grandparents will be the one to contact him looking for lessons. I imagine that given time Mr. Arbutus will begin to teach a third generation of some families. Communication between the parents and grandparents of the potential students and the parents and grandparents of current students is a perfect example of how word of mouth works.

The findings of the current study related to Rochford (1968) findings that people sympathizing with the ISKCON movement were likely to influence persons within their social sphere to become a member. In many ways the grandparents and parents of potential students ostensibly appear to function similarly to the ISKCON movement sympathizers. Often it was the parents that made first contact with their student's teacher. Elizabeth, a student of Mr. Stanley, recalling her first meeting with Mr. Stanley said, "I really don't remember...I think my mom just called." (Elizabeth, Interview, 2010) An exchange as simple as this appears to regularly occur for Mr. Stanley and Mr. Arbutus.

Mr. Cypress experienced word of mouth in another way that incorporated the sympathetic parents. Parents of a student currently taking private lessons can also influence the decisions of other parents looking to obtain private lesson for their child. Mr. Cypress said, "they just try to find a friend of that kid, talk to their parents, you know" (Mr. Cypress, Interview 2, 2010). During the conversational exchange between the parents if it is determined that the child currently studying

with Mr. Cypress is having a positive experience the parent searching for a teacher may think, “well I’ll just take him to that guy” (Mr. Cypress, Interview 2, 2010). Ultimately in this situation Mr. Cypress has been “that guy” many times throughout his career.

*Location.* My findings related to Costa-Giomi (2004) attempt to explore and analyze the behaviors of students that ultimately dropped out of piano lessons. During the search for behaviors that may predict that a student will drop out a significant amount of demographical implications arose. Children living in lower income situations are more likely to quit lessons. The current study did not reveal any indication that socioeconomic status of a private studio-based teacher’s location impacted the recruitment or retention. However, Costa-Giomi’s findings did show that lowered motivation and diminished achievement were behaviors indicative of students that would drop out of lessons.

All of the participants at some point have benefitted from being a part of an organization such as a music retail store, community arts center, or private teaching institution. Mr. Cypress maintained, “It helps to be attached to some organization because they usually are putting the word out too” (Mr. Cypress, Interview 2, 2010). Mr. Whistler indicated that an individual teaching for a music store may have an advantage because the potential students may not be seeking instruction from a specific private studio-based music teacher.

At the time of this writing there was no literature that examined the effects, advantages, and characteristics of a private studio-based teacher’s studio location.

Mr. Arbutus began his private studio-based teaching career by making house calls and teaching out of his home. Later he would eventually move to a small studio connected to a well-known music retail store.

Mr. Arbutus viewed his “centrally located” private studio as an easy place to meet with students (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 2, 2010). There was a music retail store attached to Mr. Arbutus’s location that was a perceived advantage to other locations or going to teach at student’s homes. An organization or institution may have advertising resources to wage an active and passive recruiting campaign which by default will help the teacher build a larger stable of private students.

Mr. Whistler’s career has had almost the exact opposite experience. While he began teaching at a privately run percussion instructional organization, he has moved his teaching operation into a home studio. In his experience leaving the organization made it possible for him to have a group of students that were specifically interested in pursuing instruction with him.

Mr. Stanley has maintained a successful teaching career by offering private instruction to students participating in school band programs. Often his lessons are in the band room at the high school that the student attends.

Each participant provided a service that fit a niche within his community. The actual location in which the lessons took place and the institution organizing the private studio-based instruction offered teachers such as Mr. Arbutus a perceived advantage over other private studio-based music teachers that provide instruction at other venues.

*Presence in Schools/Community.* Julion et al. (2000) presented a study of recruitment and retention strategies used to recruit families representative of racial minorities that reside in urban areas, or inner cities. Result of the study showed that one of the most useful tools for recruitment to be spending time in the community, getting to know community leaders, and building trust with community members. Holding a strong presence in the community can be a great asset for any recruiting effort.

While collecting data it became apparent that Mr. Stanley maintained a strong presence in the schools in his community. Part of what Mr. Stanley considers an active presence is attending concerts and other related activities. “I go to all the concerts...all the fundraisers”, explained Mr. Stanley. At these events he is visible to students and parents that participate in band programs. Furthermore Mr. Stanley will accompany band directors to classrooms in order to help the band director recruit for the band programs. Many of the students that choose to play percussion in the school band eventually take lessons with Mr. Stanley.

Mr. Whistler has also maintain presence in school band programs throughout his career, but at the current moment he has too many tasks to complete and therefore has reduced his direct service to area schools. He spoke about putting “together some percussion ensembles at the middle school” in addition to his busy teaching schedule. (Mr. Whistler, Interview 2, 2010) Mr. Whistler is at the top of the list when it comes to band directors funneling private studio-based music teacher information to students. While he is not physically present during the school day he

still make a point of helping students with music from their respective band programs. In this way he is present through his students confidence and ability to achieve a high level of success.

*Reputation.* A good reputation with the community is essential when recruiting students for private studio-based lessons. Julion et al (2000) describes the concept of “doing time” to be one of the most effective tools in getting to know the members of a community. Mr. Arbutus and Mr. Whistler both maintain a significant degree of contact with band directors working at school in their immediate area. However, a positive reputation combined with a high presence in the schools seems to help in recruiting new students and keeping current students interested.

Word of mouth is a vehicle for spreading a private studio-based music teacher’s reputation throughout the community. Because of his presence in the schools and excellent reputation in the community Mr. Stanley is widely know by the students, parents, and even grandparents. “Some of them” stated Mr. Stanley, “I had their parents in band and so they know “that I give private lessons” (Mr. Stanley, Interview 2, 2010). Mr. Stanley teaches students that participate in concert band, marching band, jazz band, and winter drum-line. Students playing in these ensembles often perform at very high levels at concerts, contests, and festivals during the school year. People watching the students perform often see Mr. Stanley’s name in a program or hear it announced. His hard work as a private

studio-based music teacher and an ensemble director has helped to build a very positive reputation.

A student of a private studio-based music teacher such as Davie, a student of Mr. Whistler, stated how a teacher's reputation comes to be known by students. Band directors that work in school music programs often advocate for private studio-based music teachers. Davie said, "All of the band directors that I've had...they all are very familiar with Mr. Whistler" (Davie, Interview, 2010). By having an association with the area band directors and when word of mouth is spreading, students quickly learn of a private studio-based teacher's reputation. Other students can also speak about the reputation of various private studio-based music teachers. "Most percussionists that I have been around go to take lessons from him (Mr. Whistler)" (Davie, Interview, 2010). Ultimately a private studio-based teacher's reputation draws potential students.

*Performance.* By directing or teaching an ensemble that actively performs in the community or performing as a freelance artist often makes a connection with people living within that community. When this situation is compared with the findings of Julion et al. (2000) it becomes clear that spending time in the community increase the community's aware of an organization or individual.

Even potential students and their parents become aware of private studio-based lessons through performances given in a community. As a young child Elizabeth, a student studying with Mr. Stanley, became aware of organized band music when attending concerts in which her older sister participated. At these

concerts Elizabeth paid close attention to the drummer. Mr. Stanley may have been the private studio-based music teacher of the student performing on the drums at any given performance.

Mr. Stanley understands the energy that is created by an excellent performance can attract students to study music. “If you pull a drum-set out there and do a couple of crashes and fast little licks...they’ll go crazy” (Mr. Stanley, Interview 2, 2010). The idea that the students will literally go crazy is perhaps only half true as most will sit quietly listening while being enamored by the music. The drum set is an attractive instrument to students because it “can relate to the music videos they see.” By leading student groups in concerts and performing with the groups Mr. Stanley is actively reaching out to the students in his immediate area.

Mr. Cypress and Mr. Whistler both encourage students to perform by hosting recital nights. The recitals give the current students a venue in which to perform musical selections that they have been studying in private studio-based lessons. Recitals also attract new students. “Having recitals and if some of these kids have their friends come then. I’ve had kids say to me, ‘man I want to do that now’” recalls Mr. Cypress. Performance can motivate current students as well as attract new students to a private studio-based music teacher.

*Fun and Enjoyment.* My findings resembled Rife, Shenk, Lauby and Lapidus (2001) previous study in order to examine children’s satisfaction with private music lessons. The results of this study indicated that motivators such as feeling good or having fun needed to present in the perceptions of the child in order for them to



continue with lessons. Fun was considered to be a monumental reason given by teachers and students for the continuation of private studio-based music study.

Fun and enjoyment is something that Mr. Whistler, Mr. Arbutus, Mr. Cypress, and Mr. Stanley strive to incorporate in their lessons in order to keep the atmosphere of private studio-based music lessons attractive. It is important for both the teacher and the student to enjoy the lessons otherwise the experience would be jaded for one or both of the parties involved.

When someone states that music lessons are fun it could be a little bit of a misnomer because there is work involved in order to make progress. The participants of this study cited a lack of preparation as the biggest enemy against having fun. When a student fails to adequately prepare for a lesson Mr. Cypress says, “it’s no fun for anyone” (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). Mr. Whistler tries to create an uplifting relaxed atmosphere when teaching private studio-based lessons. It is his perception that if a student is having fun he “feels like (they) move faster with an easy-going attitude, having fun” (Mr. Whistler, Interview 3, 2010). Progress is difficult to maintain if the student is not having fun and is not adequately prepared for private lessons.

*Achievement.* Klinedinst (1991) examined the ability of selected factors to predict achievement and retention of beginning instrumental music students. Results indicated that attitude towards music, self-concept in music, and home musical background have a strong “interrelationship indicating that student s from music homes tend to have positive attitudes toward music and possess a good self-

concept regarding music” (p. 235). Having a positive perception of their own music experience, students may be more inclined to continue studying music.

Achievement is something that can motivate a student when properly revealed. “Everybody gets to achieve” said Mr. Arbutus “how little that may be” (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 3, 2010). By recognizing achievement or progress and helping students to recognize this helps to motivate students to continue with private studio-based music lessons. The various ways to help students realize their achievements includes opportunities like recitals, solo/ensemble contest, school band concerts, and auditions for various ensembles.

For example, Mr. Stanley requires the “younger kids...to take a mallet solo and a snare drum solo” to contest (Mr. Stanley, Interview 3, 2010) Such contests are often used as measuring stick, or predictor of motivation and effort according to Mr. Stanley. Often a student that lacks adequate preparation for the yearly contest will choose to discontinue lessons, thus achieving very little in lessons. Setting goals and having a performance outlet helps a student to stay motivated and become acquainted with performing. Often students will meet there goals and feel the success of having achieved the goals set by themselves and their teacher.

Mr. Whistler feels “that the work ethic of working towards a goal and being able to do it” is an important lessons for students to learn (Mr. Whistler, Interview 3, 2010). The only way to for them to become knowledgeable and physically able to perform is to go through the process of preparing performances time and time

again. Understanding work ethic and achieving goals is important not only in musical instruction, but to the entirety of a student's life.

*Teaching Methods.* The results of this study related to Albert's (2006) findings that students can be recruited for music programs that offer music that is culturally relevant to the community at large. While Albert viewed a culturally relevant ensemble as a means of recruitment, it can be interpreted and adapted to motivational teaching strategies that seemingly engage students in private studio lessons for certain periods of time. Mr. Whistler has an assignment series that encourages students to learn how to play music that they enjoy. A student will choose a song or passage of music in order to transcribe it or learn it by ear. When they arrive at a lesson Mr. Whistler asks the student to perform the song of his or her choice. Following the performance Mr. Whistler will help the student to correct any mistakes or shortcomings. Next, he will have the student transpose the song into another key. This helps the student to develop a repertoire of popular tunes and develop the technical skills involved with transcribing and transposing music. This particular method has a certain appeal to it that may be a component of a student's decision to continue lessons with Mr. Whistler.

Davie, a student of Mr. Whistler, noted, "Mr. Whistler has kind of a laid back teaching style." (Davie, Interview, 2010) During his experience Davie often would not complete the indicated assignment in his assignment book, but he did not perceive that Mr. Whistler was too frustrated with him. "He wouldn't yell at me...maybe he would mention it, but we would just work at the lessons" (Davie,

Interview, 2010). Having teaching strategies and methods that incorporate patience are a characteristic of Mr. Whistler's private studio-based music teaching career.

Mr. Arbutus handles each of the students on a case-by-case basis that allows him to adapt to the student's method of learning. By maintaining flexibility and treating students as individuals Mr. Arbutus attempts to keep the student engaged in a positive manner.

*Distractions.* While the first part of Duke, Flowers, and Wolfe's (1998) findings related to retention was a lack of enjoyment, the second was competing activities, or distractions. The scheduling of other activities often conflict with private studio-based music lessons and the students ability to adequately practice. Private studio-based music teachers deal with a variety of distractions such as softball, baseball, basketball, drama club, marching band, family vacations, and other kinds of travel.

Mr. Stanley has noticed students that continue with lessons "aren't heavily involved with sports" (Mr. Stanley, Interview 3, 2010). Within reason it can be inferred that students not involved in sports have more time to dedicate to attending lessons and practicing assignments. While the conflict with organized sports has been constantly present during Mr. Stanley's career as a teacher, he has observed, "that more girls are involved in sports especially at a young age" (Mr. Stanley, Interview 3, 2010). During the interview he continued to elaborate on how club sports for girls such as volleyball, basketball, and cheerleading posed a high degree of difficulty when scheduling private music lessons.

Mr. Cypress also constantly deals with sports as a distraction to private studio-based music lessons. Not only are many of his students involved in sports, the commitment level to that sport is very high for even the youngest students. While he encourages students to become involved in a variety of extra-curricular activities he sees “destructive sports schedules” conflicting with lessons and to a larger extent curricular homework. “There is too much commitment required from a lot of school sports for younger kids” explained Mr. Cypress (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). A student may leave directly from school to attend a practice followed by a short period in which a parent may bring dinner to the student with only a few moments before the next practice begins. Busy schedules not only impact the scheduling aspect of private studio-based music lessons, they also severely limit the time that a student can spend practicing and preparing for lessons which can lead to a lack of fun and enjoyment.

Mr. Arbutus has noticed that sports are not the only distraction. Academic demands placed on students can also interrupt the consistency needed to progress in private studio-based music lessons. Students being pressured to “be at the top of their class” have decided to discontinue private studio-based music lessons (Mr. Arbutus, Interview 3, 2010). Being at the top of the class in high school can mean that students are in competition for various scholarships as well as class valedictorian or salutatorian, which are quite significant accomplishments.

*Parental Involvement.* Klinedinst (1991) found that “interrelationships indicating that students from music homes tend to have positive attitudes towards

music” (p. 235). Mr. Whistler observed that one great benefit of having students perform recitals and at solo contests was that it involved the parents. Many times parents are content to merely leave their youngsters with the teacher and not be involved in the musical upbringing. Contests involve the parents “because they attend...” and they also “see their son or daughter is doing well in band” (Mr. Whistler, Interview 3, 2010). Not only does the contest or recital reveal achievement to the students it also engages the parents, which is very important.

Parental involvement with their child’s private studio-based instruction can have a positive and/or negative impact on the decision to continue with studio-based instruction. Mr. Cypress must overcome the attitudes held by parents that had a negative experience with private studio-based lessons as children. Mr. Cypress hinted that they, “don’t make their kids practice” (Mr. Cypress, Interview 3, 2010). Parents must work with the children and the private studio-based music teachers in order to make sure that there is consistent attendance at lessons, and adequate practice and preparation for the lessons. The parents of students taking private studio-based lessons have a role, be that positive or negative, in the student’s choice to continue or discontinue lessons.

Mr. Stanley will have a direct conversation with the parents if a student is showing sign of inadequate preparation and effort. When he perceives that the student is “really not into it” he will “have a conversation with the parents” in order to bring up the issue and make them aware that continuation in lessons may not be “worth it” (Mr. Stanley, Interview 3, 2010). Ultimately having an open channel of

communication between the private studio-based music teacher and the parents is something that may have a heavy impact on the dynamic of private lessons.

In summary, parental involvement is an aspect of private studio-based music instruction that can positively or negatively impact the period in which a student is retained by a private studio-based music teacher. Parents with negative attitudes could in some ways cast a dark cloud of negativity around their child's experience with private lessons. Parents with positive attitudes often enhance the experience of the student by expressing positive energy and following the instructions of the private studio-based music teacher.

### *Limitations of the Project*

At the onset of this project I had hoped to find several key strategies or techniques that private studio-based teachers used in order to influence the recruitment and retention of students. The expectation of the project was that each participant, although unique, would in some ways share similarities in the way their careers operated.

The interview sequence for each participant had a uniqueness that created a mosaic of perceptions with regard to recruitment and retention. From my perspective as the researcher, it was not easy to find a distinctly concrete and common thread that strongly linked the perceptions of teachers, students, and artifacts. The process of data collection revealed that each source was quite different.

Student's perception of recruitment and retention was limited by their ability to understand recruitment and retention when they began lessons. Young students such as Davie and Elizabeth showed an interest in music but it was not until their parents stepped in did they find a teacher. The student participants had spent several years studying privately and were therefore able to articulate why they chose to continue studying with a private studio based music teacher. While the student's perception is very important to understanding the relationship between teachers and students in the area of retention, it seemed to reveal only a vague description of how he or she came to know their teacher.

The teacher's perception of recruitment was seemingly passive based on their comments during the interview sequence. None of the participants of this study concretely stated that they used any type of commercial advertisement to find potential students. Most often, private studio based music teachers had a strong connection with the community at large and music teachers at nearby schools.

The artifact analysis did not relate to any of the comments made by students or teachers. While artifacts such as large signs in front of the location, signs on the door of the teaching studio, and a website were found during the data collection process none of the teachers or students mentioned or even made an attempt to include the found artifact. Such things as word of mouth, reputation, and performing locally seemingly do not produce a tangible artifact that can be passed from person to person or displayed grandly in public view. Finding a way to tie in the found artifacts to the comments made by the participants was nearly impossible.



*Conclusion*

Some of the themes that were present in the literature (e.g. consumers and investors) did not emerge in the data collection and analysis procedures. Even though some of these concepts did not relate to this study, they could be used as a theoretical framework for future research. My hope for this work, research, and time spent is for current private studio-based music teachers and students aspiring to become private studio-based music teachers will have an idea of what lies before them. All interviews with the participants metaphorically stripped away many layers of vagueness that enshrouded the inner sanctum of the phenomena that coincides with private studio-based musical instruction. With a little more insight and understanding, individuals choosing this path may have timely success in the area of private studio-based musical instruction.

At the time nearing the completion of this project my personal life has also reaped the benefits of this body of work. Moving to a new town is never an easy-going adventure for a musician. I have moved to the other side of the continent and to another country. While although I may speak the most common and unifying language and many things are similar in the field of music there are differences. However, there is a population of young students aspiring to learn the art of music from a private studio-based music teacher. The concepts uncovered in the findings of this project can be used by anyone interested in private studio-based musical instruction. An individual may at his leisure choose to adopt, adapt, or transform the

concepts found in this project to suit his or her circumstance. By no means are these concepts, ideas, or strategies the only pathway to success.

Although only nearly eight weeks have elapsed since the great cross-continental journey, I have a first hand knowledge of how the ideas discovered in this project apply to life in the musical industry. Even a small amount of effort and perseverance can help to make progress. While I might not have a studio full of brilliant minds knocking down my door for lessons, I have first hand knowledge in the phenomena of word of mouth and networking. Building a network, even one that is small, can help to guide you to the avenue of quick and continual success. Making contact with other musicians, private studio-based music teachers, and music teachers in public schools is a great advantage to an individual looking to pursue a career in music as a performer or teacher. More than anything, how can you sell your knowledge, resources, and abilities?

Retention has yet to present itself in a similarly obvious manner, but given more time I believe it will. For the purposes of this conclusion let's see how Mr. Whistler's idea of "not thinking about it" could hypothetically work out (Mr. Whistler, Interview 3, 2010). Ultimately private studio-based music teachers must focus on the present task of teaching. The present journey requires the individual to focus on the journey rather than the duration of enrollment. The art of teaching and music deserves to be in the foreground of the teacher's mind while the retention of the student is pushed to the background in order to allow concentration on the message.

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## Appendix A

### Interview Protocols

#### Interview #1

##### Personal Information (Private Studio-Based Music Teachers)

1. How long have you been involved with the teaching of private studio-based lessons?
2. How long have you been teaching in your current location?
3. Please describe your musical upbringing. For example did you take lessons, study in college, or teach yourself?
4. What is your highest completed level of education?
5. Describe your performance experience in music.
6. Which instruments do you teach?
7. At the current moment how many students are currently taking lessons at this location?

#### Interview #2

##### Information Regarding Recruitment

1. How do you think students become aware that you are offering lessons?
2. Why do you think students become interested in music lessons?
3. What types of strategies do you use to recruit students for your specific location?
4. Which strategies do you find to be the most effective and why?
5. How often you do rely on these strategies?
6. Do you notice patterns or seasonal influx of prospective students?
7. How do you think continuation or implementation of recruitment strategies could affect a private studio?

#### Interview #3

##### Information Regarding Recruitment

1. Why do you think students continue with lessons?
2. What are some reasons that students discontinue lessons?
3. What types of strategies do you use in order to keep students interested and continuing lessons?
4. Which of these strategies do you find to be the most effective and why?
5. How often do you rely on these strategies?
6. Do you notice patterns of attrition?
7. Why to you think some students discontinue lessons
8. How do you think retention strategies could affect a private studio?

## Student Interview Protocol

### Student information:

1. How long have you been taking private studio-based music lessons?
2. What influenced your decision to become involved in private studio-based lessons?
3. How did you meet your teacher?
4. When did you first meet your teacher?
5. Do you enjoy your private studio-based music lessons?
6. What are some things that influence you to continue coming for lessons?
7. What are some of your favorite things about your lessons?



Appendix B  
Artifact protocol

Artifacts relating to recruitment: \_\_\_\_\_

What are the physical characteristics of the artifact?

How does the artifact function as a tool for recruiting students?

Artifacts relating to retention: \_\_\_\_\_

What are the physical characteristics of the artifact?

How does the artifact function as a tool for retaining students?

## Appendix C

### Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

Resent-From: <tavancleave@bsu.edu>  
From: Amy Boos <no-reply@irbnet.org>  
Subject: **IRBNet Board Action**  
Date: May 5, 2010 11:10:12 AM PDT  
To: Ryan Hourigan <rmhourigan@bsu.edu>, Timothy Van Cleave <tavancleave@bsu.edu>  
Reply-To: Amy Boos <akboos@bsu.edu>

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Please note that Ball State University IRB has taken the following action on IRBNet:

Project Title: [152505-2] Perceptions of Studio Based Music Teachers Regarding Recruitment and Retention of Students  
Principal Investigator: Timothy Van Cleave, BM, MM, ABD

Submission Type: Revision  
Date Submitted: April 23, 2010

Action: APPROVED  
Effective Date: May 5, 2010  
Review Type: Expedited Review

Should you have any questions you may contact Amy Boos at akboos@bsu.edu.

Thank you,  
The IRBNet Support Team

[www.irbnet.org](http://www.irbnet.org)

## Appendix D

### Introductory Letter and Consent Forms

**Timothy Van Cleave**

1107 E. Adams St. • Muncie, Indiana 47305  
Phone: (765) 730-1962 • E-Mail: [tavancleave@bsu.edu](mailto:tavancleave@bsu.edu)

Dear Private Studio-Based Music Teacher:

My name is Timothy Van Cleave, and I am a Doctoral student at Ball State University. For my dissertation, I am conducting a study of private studio-based music teacher's perceptions on the recruitment and retention of students. I am asking for your help to gain insight and understanding into the career of private teaching. There are to be three teacher interviews of no more than approximately 30 minutes each and one short student interview.

The purpose of this project is to examine the recruitment and retention strategies used by private studio-based music teachers in private industry. Through this study I hope to create a list of effective recruitment and retention strategies that can be understood and used by less experienced private studio-based teachers.

Ultimately, knowing the effective recruitment and retention strategies used by other private studio-based teachers may help to make the endeavor of private teaching more successful and enjoyable for both teacher and student.

Sincerely,

Timothy Van Cleave

Principal Researcher:

Timothy Van Cleave, Graduate Student  
Percussion/Music Theory and Composition  
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Dr. Ryan M. Hourigan  
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**Timothy Van Cleave**

1107 E. Adams St. • Muncie, Indiana 47305  
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Date: May 20, 2010

Dear Private Studio-Based Music Teacher,

During the summer semester of 2010, you have the opportunity to participate in a research study through Ball State University. This letter will describe the study, provide contact information for any questions you may have, and give you the option of participating.

The study is entitled: *Perceptions of Studio-Based Music Teachers Regarding Recruitment and Retention of Students*.

Understanding the phenomena of recruitment and retention and the perceptions of private studio-based music teachers is the purpose and central focus of this study. This study will examine the perceptions of studio-based music teachers regarding the recruitment and retention of students. Through a series of interviews, including teachers and students, effective recruitment and retention strategies will be revealed.

In order to be eligible participate in this study, you must be a studio-based music teacher with a minimum of five years experience and currently maintaining a private studio that has no institutional affiliation.

In order to gather the information three interviews will take place at a later date to be determined. The interviews will be audio recorded in addition to field notes taken by the observer.

All data collected will be securely stored on a password-protected computer that only I can access and the information provided will be held with the greatest degree of confidentiality. At the conclusion of the study the results can be made available to you upon request.

Privacy is a great concern of mine. After a period of no more than three years the information that has been gathered will be deleted. Your privacy will be fervently protected at all times during the period of study and thereafter. The study has been designed so there are no foreseeable risks or ill effects for the participants. However, you may discontinue the study at any time before or after the study has begun.

The main benefit of this study will be to find out which recruitment and retention strategies are most effective in private studio teaching. Overall it is my hope that with better recruitment and retention strategies the experience will be enhanced for both teacher and student.

Your involvement in this project is strictly voluntary. Please feel free to ask any questions of the researcher before signing this Informed consent form and at any time before or during the study.

For questions about your rights as a research subject, please contact Research Compliance, Sponsored Programs Office, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070, [irb@bsu.edu](mailto:irb@bsu.edu).

Consent Statement:

I consent to participate in this research project entitled, "Perceptions of Private Studio-Based Music Teachers Regarding Recruitment and Retention of Students." I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

Principal Researcher:

Timothy Van Cleave, Graduate Student  
Percussion/Music Theory and Composition  
Ball State University  
Muncie, IN 47306  
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**Timothy Van Cleave**

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Date: May 20, 2010

Dear Parents of music students in private lessons,

During the spring semester of 2010, your child has the opportunity to participate in a research study through Ball State University. A portion of this study includes a short interview of the student, which seeks to draw connections with the recruitment and retention strategies used by the student's private studio-based music teacher. This letter will describe the study, provide contact information for any questions you may have, and give you and your child the option of participating.

The study is entitled: *Perceptions of Studio-Based Music Teachers Regarding Recruitment and Retention of Students*.

Understanding the phenomena of recruitment and retention and the perceptions of private studio-based music teachers is the purpose and central focus of this study. By interviewing your student, I hope to find insight into the phenomena of recruitment and retention. The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of studio-based music teachers regarding the recruitment and retention of students.

In order for your child to be eligible to participate in this study he or she must be enrolled in lessons with a studio-based music teacher.

In order to gather the information one interview will take place following the students predetermined lesson time as scheduled by the private studio-based music teacher. The interview will be audio recorded in addition to field notes taken by the observer.

All data collected will be securely stored on a password-protected computer that only I can access and the information provided will be held with the greatest degree of confidentiality. At the conclusion of the study the results can be made available to you upon request.

Privacy is a great concern of mine. After a period of no more than three years the information that has been gathered will be deleted. Your privacy will be fervently protected at all times during the period of study and thereafter. The study has been designed so there are no foreseeable risks or ill effects for the participants. However, your child may discontinue the study at any time before or after the study has begun.

The main benefit of this study will be to find out which recruitment and retention strategies are most effective in private studio teaching. Overall it is my hope that with better recruitment and retention strategies the experience will be enhanced for both teacher and student.

Your child's involvement in this project is strictly voluntary and will have no effect on your child's evaluation or their relationship with their music teacher. Please feel free to ask any questions of the researcher before signing this Parental Permission form and at any time before or during the study.

For questions about your and your child's rights as a research subject, please contact Research Compliance, Sponsored Programs, Ball State University, Muncie, IN 47306, (765) 285-5070, [irb@bsu.edu](mailto:irb@bsu.edu).

## Parental Consent Statement:

I give permission for my child to participate in this researcher project entitled, "Perceptions of Private Studio-Based Music Teachers Regarding Recruitment and Retention of Students." I have had the study explained to me and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have read the descriptions of this project and give my permission for my child to participate.

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

## Child Assent Statement:

The researcher project has been explained to me, and I have been allowed to ask questions about it. I understand what I am being asked to do, and I agree to participate in the researcher

Child's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_

## Principal Researcher:

Timothy Van Cleave, Graduate Student  
Percussion/Music Theory and Composition  
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